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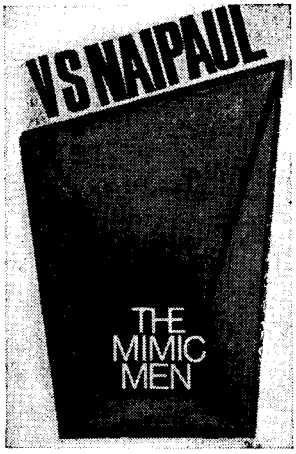

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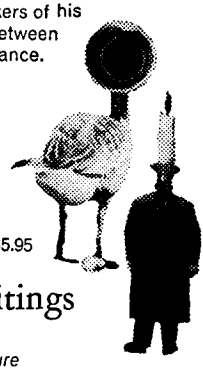

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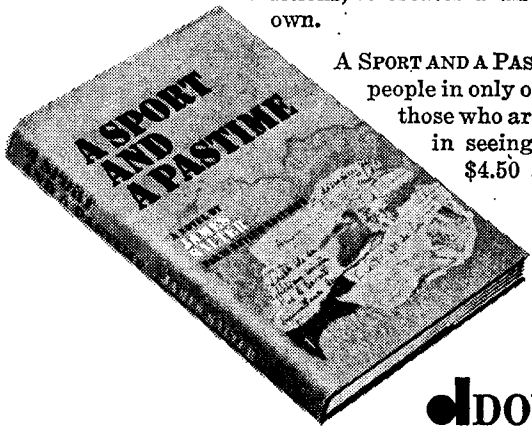

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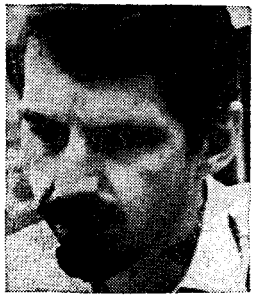

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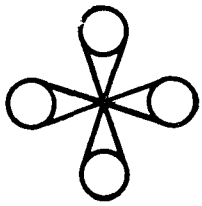

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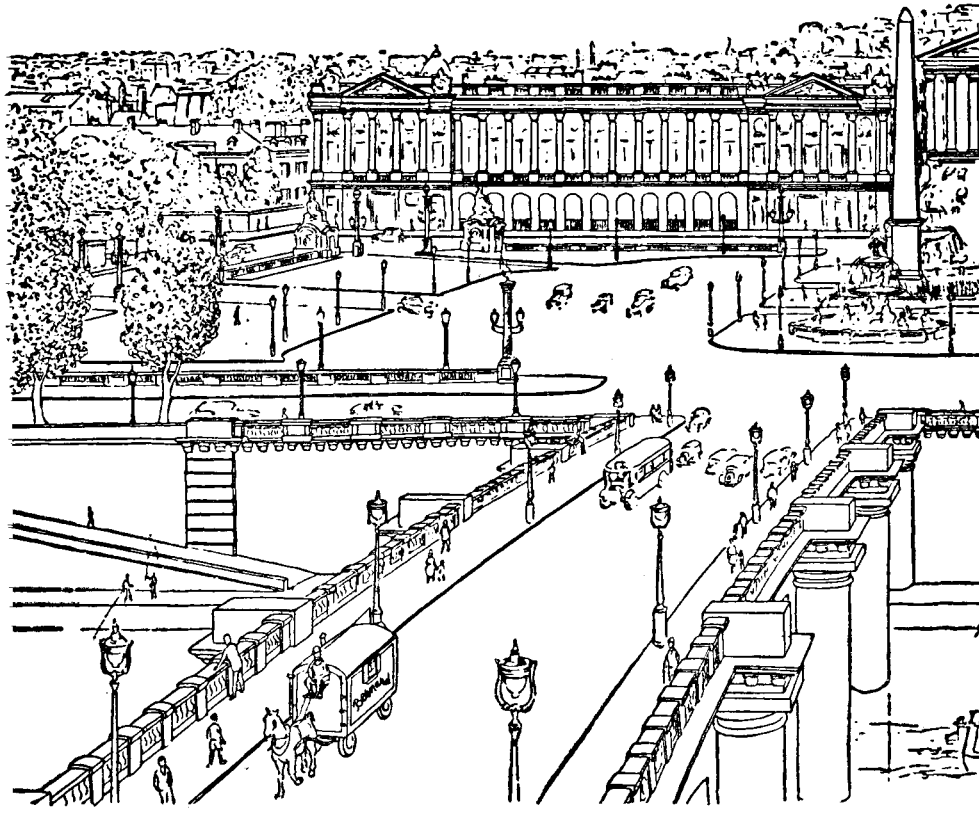

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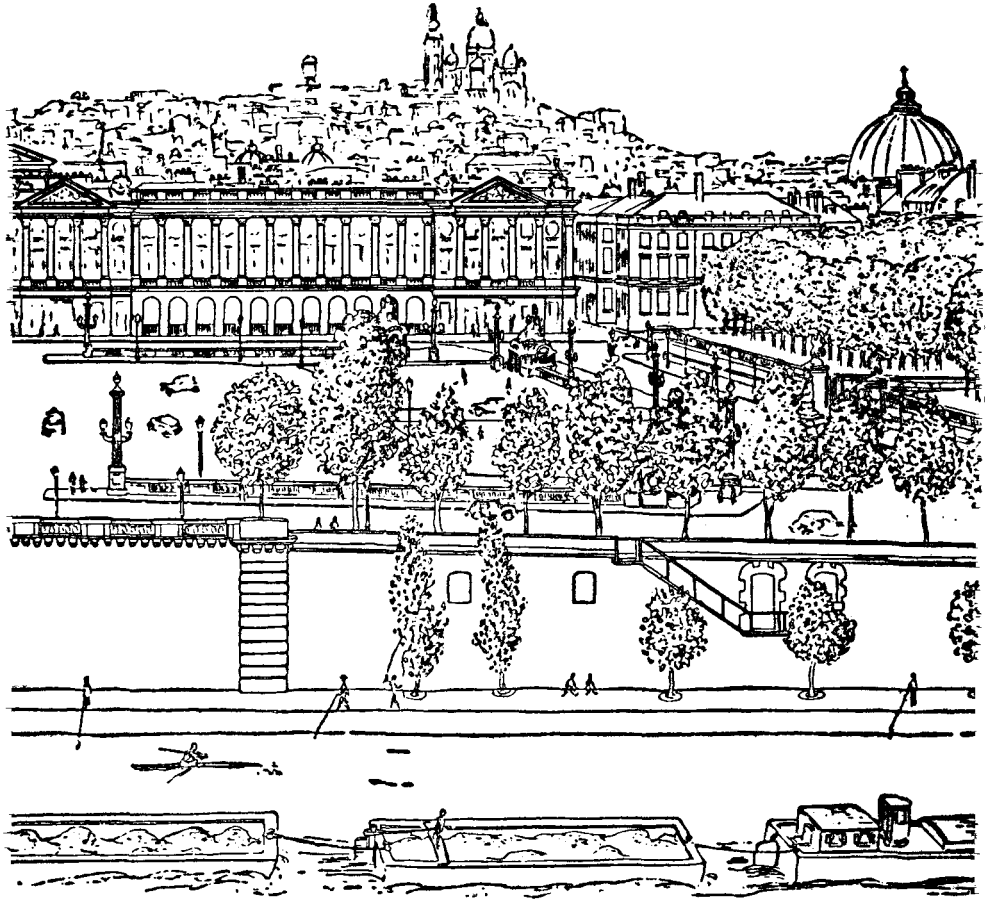

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George

Christina Stead

New York: late forties.

George Paul came to see the Deans, man and wife, soon after dinner. Tall, ample, muscular, blue eyes in a red boyish face, thick bronze hair in a brush cut, he was fifty years old; but walking like a young man from the exercises he did to keep fit; and energetic, a restless worker. He looked tired and anxious.

"No, no food, no drink. I am on a diet my Paris friend Bercovici gives me. Coffee, tea and wine keep me awake. I take them if I must sit up all night to finish an article, but they give me a headache. I always have headaches," he murmured, looking towards Laura.

He sat down in an armchair, clutching the arms and looking about as if ready to jump up. He did jump up, and walked about.

"I told Martin," he said to Laura, excusing himself, "I explained that it was a long story and if you hadn't the time, I wouldn't come at all. But I'm in trouble—and it's one of those times when it's better to tell someone. I'm in love, madly in love—with this girl Renee and I'm miserable, wretched; I don't see a solution. She promised to marry me; but I'm afraid I can't hold her. It's this—woman—she's living with;

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an invalid with the clutch of an invalid and an ugly woman. When an ugly woman gets hold of something, she sticks to it. You begin by pitying her; you're lost. Every defect, every flaw and every weakness has its cunning. You know that?" he said violently. "We say the handsome use their looks. The ugly use their looks; and the sick use their sickness; and old age uses its age. Don't pity anyone. I wake up every night at two or three o'clock. I think, I'll do some work. I jump up, drink some milk and start to work. I never lie in bed and torture myself. I work. If there's a solution, it will come to me while I'm working. But that's enough! I must get back to normal. My friend Bercovici gave me some pills. He understands me. I take one of these pills; I feel better. I think, That's it. It was nonsense; I'm out of it. I start my work. An hour later, my face feels wet, it's like rain. The stars are out, it's fine weather, the moon is up; it's so bright that I can work by moonlight. The rain is tears. I'm crying for her without thinking of her at all. I can't say to her, My mind's breaking up—I'm wasting months—one word from you and I'd be well. I can't ask for sympathy. Besides, I think she guesses; she says she suffers too. I can't beg. I can't do it to her.

"I woke up suddenly last night, after about two hours' sleep. The sheet's torn right down the middle. I mended it myself, but it keeps ripping. I tossed about pulling up the sheet, but I couldn't make it come up; and I said to myself, *There's such a fighting in my heart.* It came to me, out of my trouble. But isn't that from Hamlet? Yes, but it came to me, in the silence. I live in silence; but with me there's no real silence. Either I'm working out one of my stories; or I'm talking to her. I tell her everything. I explain everything to her. Everything she says starts up an idea in me, a complete idea; it spreads out on both sides, like a landscape. That's the effect she has on me. And in silence, I explain all this to her. I talk to her in silence. I love her so deeply: in silence.

"No, it can't go on," he said, pulling out a handkerchief and wiping his eyes. "My eyes water. It's an injection I had against tetanus. I go to places—there are dogs." He put away the handkerchief. "I fought it for months. One day I said to

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myself, It's love and I've loved her since the first time I saw her. I stopped short and thought about it. There's a time when you do that. You stand at a signpost: Danger. After this, no going back.

"*Sonne, Mond und Sterne lachen,*
Und ich lache mit—und sterbe."

"Heine," said Martin.

"Yes," cried George. He turned round, stood in front of the couple and smiled, "I was happy! I was happy. You know I'm irritable—I don't like ugly old men and women. I hate old age. When I was a child, four, my grandfather and grandmother came to see me. I was a favorite child. They sat near me; bent over in dark clothes and they smelled of old clothes, old bodies, old hair, old snuff. They had red eyes, hands with brown spots, hairy nostrils. They tried to sing old songs to amuse me. My grandfather even had a fiddle with a thin squeak and he would caper; while my grandmother had a mannish laugh and wore starched white lace round her thick neck. They invited me to dinner and tied round my neck a stiff damask napkin that smelled of the cupboards and old oranges stuck with cloves they kept there; and their house, too, smelled of mold. I used to run out of the house and halloo, pretending to be a lively boy; and I ran in at the last moment to kiss their dry cheeks. When they died, I was relieved. I was not cruel. I was a kind boy. Well—last year I was kind to old men and women, and women who annoyed me, even to an aggressive waitress in a café I go to. I can't stand her; I'm always rude to her. But last year I was nice to her, I was so happy. I didn't ask anything of Renee at first. I was in love and I was thinking of all I could do to help her. And I thought, I have never been in love before, never with this sweet feeling of forgiveness and trying to understand everything."

He walked up and down. "And now! What I have been through! What I have suspected her of! And it's I who suffer. She has her own troubles. Too many to think of me. Then I spend days forgiving her for what she never did, for the insults and mean things I invented in my trouble. I shall go mad; I believe I shall go mad. I go on inventing things about

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her—why she stays away from me, why she hesitates. And the situation is simple. I know what it is. I told you it was a long story. Do you mind? I can go."

"No, no."

The couple, a short dark man and a middle-sized fair woman, were about George Paul's age and they had met years before. George Paul took a deep breath, then said, "What is it, I wonder? A deep breath is like drinking the lake, it gives you happiness. I was so happy last year, like a boy—but as a boy," he said angrily, "I was not happy. Now I have had a year of torment. My head thumps, the nerves in my brain are on fire; I can feel where they run and see them, thin red hot wires. I know where they go, I can see the pattern, I can see their fiery tracks. I sleep an hour and wake up to feel them burning all round my brain. Perhaps I'm on the verge of brain-fever? I have been so bad for six months, up half the night, working in the day time; and she doesn't get in touch with me or write to me, she puts me off. She says, I'll see you in two weeks. I jump and I shout, Two weeks! I'm angry and stamp off. Next time I see her, she says, I'll see you in two weeks, and watches me to see what I will do. I smile, Yes, all right. I go back home and smile. I fooled her. I didn't stamp and shout. I am quite happy and calm. Then I begin to suffer. I suffer horribly. It goes on and on, week after week, month after month. I can't afford it. I had grippe. I got well. I had grippe again. It took me longer to get well and I am weak. Look at me," he said turning to them, "I look strong? I'm weak. My work's slipping. I have too much to do and everyone wants work or money from me."

"But why does she torture you?" asked Laura.

"She doesn't know she's torturing me. She's only a girl. She's being tortured too. She sent me a letter—that's why I came—I have it, I brought it. I suppose the woman has been at her. See what she says."

He gave Laura the letter and took a few steps away and back, ruffling his hair with one hand.

It was a small sheet of linen-grained paper on which the words were written in an imposing girls' school script.

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Dear George,

The woman who married you would be a miserable wife. You have been married before. You never made a woman happy. Where's the hope? I'm sorry. I'm not happy now, but what have you to offer me? I couldn't bear any more wandering. That's over for me. I have a home and a job. It's over.

Renee

"Those are not her words," said George. "And now I have to go through the whole thing again, argue with her, argue her out of her fears, tear her away from that vulture. Again and again. I don't mind. At least I see her, talk to her and win her. But as soon as I go away, she turns from me. I'm exhausted. It's her goodness. She's sorry for that invalid. I never could endure invalids. They live on others. They're not ashamed of anything; they beg, lie, cheat, fake; and everyone is taken in. Because," he shouted, "because we have an instinct, Look after the weak, an instinct which betrays us to them. She is being betrayed into a life of degrading servitude, a bondwoman. She'll regret it. She'll end in suicide. She never had anything. Her mother was selfish. Renee says she led a selfish life and now she wants to be of use, and she doesn't mind if it's degrading servitude. It's abominable. I can't stand a domestic drudge. Renee wants to do everything for the woman. She cleans up after her. I saw a spoiled carpet—Renee tried to wash it. I ran out of the house. She says to me, I can't live for myself, as my mother and I did before. If I could have a child, children, she says, she'd be happy. If she could have children without marrying, she'd just bring them up, she says; and she might be happy. *If I could forget myself, entirely, have no future myself.* That is what has been talked into her. I won't have children. It's the big illusion of every woman. As soon as she has a child she lives only for it; the husband doesn't count. I said, If you have children, you won't love me as much, you won't love me at all. She said, Oh, what a terrible life, what a terribly empty life. If she loves me why does she want children? If she can live for this warped invalid, why not for me? It's these formulas women learn; obey your parents, a woman can love only one man, a woman must have children. I won't have it, I

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told her. The night is for work or love or talk, not for squealing brats. And I am sure no charming refined girl like her—how could she want disorder and wet laundry everywhere? Marriage is different; marriage is passion, it's between a man and a woman. If a woman wants children, she doesn't love the man."

"There's truth in that," said Martin Dean.

"She loves me, she said so," said George.

He stood in front of them again, searching their faces. "I must tell you everything; it has come to the point where I must or go mad. I've waited months and months, seven months, a cruel tease, a tease," he said vehemently, "and she doesn't mean it, I know, although I accuse her to myself. What am I to do? What can I do? She promises and promises and then they get her—it is like someone calling out from a wood; a trapped girl. She calls, she comes half out, she is called back again. And she is in the wood, this mythical wood, with that woman. I need you, the woman says. Her name's Ray. I have nothing, Ray says; all my life I have been a burden. I had infantile paralysis and I wish my parents had let me die. You are all I ever had. It disgusts Renee; but it calls her back."

"Is the woman perverse?"

"Yes, but Renee doesn't know it. She doesn't know. She has a pure good heart. I wouldn't mention it to her. There's enough wrong in the world. I won't corrupt her."

"There's a danger."

"That's why I can't leave," he said walking up and down. "I have to go to Paris, Vienna, other places. I meant to take her with me. She gave me a date; and now see what she writes!"

He talked about her. Her father was in business in the Middle West. He married a rich woman, himself made money. He was injured in his sex in the war and could procreate but not satisfy women. He had a son before the war and a daughter afterwards; this was Renee. The mother, named Lilian, soon told the father she needed men and she meant to leave him. The father agreed to a separation; and Lilian traveled all over Europe, and put the girl in good European

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schools, where she learned languages, music, drawing and architecture.

Lilian, the mother, went to all the fashionable places spending money and doing as she liked, living with different men. The son stayed at home near his father, lived near his father, married.

"Renee is pretty, she has appeal, too; and she is like her mother, so that the mother never looked at her without saying, You're exactly like me; you'll go like me. But Renee is honest. She is chic, sensitive. She talks in a fetching way and has sweet manners. But she became morbidly fanciful and made up her mind, when she was fourteen, never to marry. The sexual relation shocked her. It seemed to her that legal marriage gave men and women a terrible indecent power over each other; they were like master and slave, brute and trainer; it brutalized them towards each other and towards other people. The mother would show Renee a picture of her father that she had cut out of the hometown newspaper; she would point to his almost hairless head, scream with laughter, make offensive jokes.

"Renee lived with her mother most of the time and men were about. Her mother told her all her experiences; You're like me, you'll be like me, you may as well know. And her mother at this time was getting letters from the father's friend. This woman, Gail, often wrote to Renee's mother. She said, Sex is not everything; I had a man before and I know what physical love is; but I love your husband for what he is, his character, his courage, his wonderful mind. The wife wrote back terrible letters, coarse, dirty letters, the letters of a spiteful old harlot. Renee read all the letters.

"At last Lilian went home, went down south and found a place that suited her; and then the quarrel between mother and daughter became too bitter and Renee left to earn her living in New York. She met a man, became pregnant, would not marry him, and would not let him pay for the abortion. It took all she had, five hundred dollars. Abortionists were on the run then. There was a police crusade against them. They had gone mostly to New Jersey. But she found one uptown.

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She was well again, working, when one evening there was a knock at the door and there were two huskies, plain-clothes men, who told her to come along as a material witness, an abortionist was being charged. She went; but she would not speak. They tried every form of verbal coercion, everything that would frighten and shock a girl; and at last they told her they would make her speak. They put on a master record of her own voice on the telephone making an appointment with the go-between; and they showed her a photograph of herself coming out of the office, being helped by a woman. It was hopeless. They told her if she would give the details, they would destroy the records, and give the abortionist a break; they only wanted to frighten him. She gave the evidence; the man was charged and died by suicide. One of her friends telephoned her and said to her, You spoke and you are the cause of his death.

"Her experiences made her lose faith in people. If she saw a policeman at a distance, she'd go round by another street. Her heart thumped when the doorbell rang. It began in Europe, when she and her mother were living in cheap hotels, when her mother was running through her money. There was a police raid once in a hotel in the rue Delambre. The mother knew, though Renee did not, that it was a *maison de passe*, a hotel under suspicion. The first floor was let out to streetwalkers; the rest of the hotel was rented to students and tourists. The police came in about five in the morning and at first doubted that they were mother and daughter. Renee could not understand it; she never understood it. It was then that she told her mother they must return home.

"After the suicide Renee moved to another address; and not to be alone, she looked for a companion, a woman. The friend I mentioned, who telephoned her and told her she was guilty of the doctor's death, brought her a woman who was an invalid, a middle-aged woman who was living with her parents and wanted to get away from them. This was Ray. She was pathetic, limping, thin and worn, with a childish smile and a low voice, almost deaf.

"I met Renee through the police. They are co-operative

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with me. I was doing some research on a case, when I saw Renee's records. They had not been destroyed. I went to see her, explained everything to her frankly, told her I was a free-lance journalist, working on stories of missing girls. She will listen to anyone; she's intelligent and charming. But she found it hard to understand that I was not connected with the police. I said I'm a crimewriter. They help me and I help them. If I find any of these lost girls, I'll tell them, for example. I sometimes happen on things. I once saved a girl's life, by telling the police about an advertisement that kept appearing every few months: an old man advertising for a young housekeeper. He had buried others in a corner of his field.

"Renee was very lonely. Her housemate was deaf and odd and tiresome. Renee's mother died and no one condoled with her because they thought, Good riddance. But Ray said, I'm so sorry dear; it's a bad thing to lose a mother. You're very lonely now. These commonplace remarks touched Renee. She said, Ray is the only person who understands that I do not hate my mother.

"I fell in love when I first saw Renee. I was soon in love, madly in love, with all the obsession of real love. I asked her to marry me as soon as I was divorced from Barby. She said she would. The lame woman made trouble; but at last two weeks ago, when the final decree came through, Renee promised me that she would get out of it. Ray made scenes and went home to her parents. She stayed away three or four days, then sent a message that she was very ill with stomach upset, that she was vomiting hour after hour some greenish stuff and had not strength to move. Probably Ray had taken something. Renee did not see what she could do. She stayed in her room, going to work and seeing me in the evenings. We arranged everything. Then the lame woman came back to prevent her leaving, for she had guessed. Of course, she looked ill, tragic; and then, every day, there were scenes. Renee was afraid of her. Renee wrote to her brother to come and help her; and now the sister-in-law is there; and this letter she wrote must be the advice she has given."

He sat down, tired and serious. "What am I to do? I have

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to go away; and now there are two of them in this mythical wood, holding her back."

Martin said, "I don't want to use the voice of common sense, George, but that girl is trouble. I knew a girl like that; my first wife. She couldn't help it; and your girl can't help it."

George said, "I know; but I love her. I really love her. There are times when I just want to stand by, to save her from any more torture; but that's impossible. I can't stay here as long as another month."

He pondered, looking down. "I loved a few girls and I married them. I would never spoil a girl. In the work I do, you see too much trouble, too much horror. I see girls' bodies in terrible conditions. I hear stories that it would be hard for people to believe. It's impossible to write the whole truth. The stories I write for the magazines, the very worst—they're not the worst. The police have the worst on file; and I have seen them."

Martin said, "But you loved other girls, George, didn't you? The others."

George walked about the room. "You love each girl differently, to suit her nature. That is how you can love many women; each is different and the love is different. You see her reality, her difference—her charm. I loved those girls. I still do, in a way, even those—those little harpies," he said, his face changing. "And this started in the same way. I thought, There is a girl I like. And it was all unexpected. I was looking for a girl. And Renee seemed sweet; and she had been ill-treated and deceived. But this is stronger than any of the others. It is so strong. And this is why I have loved so many women; so that I can know now that this is real love.

"What will I do if it breaks up?" he asked, in a despairing voice. "I could go on; but what is the use? I couldn't take it. I've never despaired. I'm not the type. So I'd rather die. I don't want to go out of my mind. I'd rather die. And there she is! She could get me out of this with just one act—stepping out of that house. And I can't hang around waiting. I ought to take a plane next week."

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"What do you think you'll do, George?"

"What am I to do, Laura? I'm worn out. Waiting and arguing and suppressing my feelings, waiting out of consideration and pride; and working through the terrible tension: and telling no one. And my work to do and the wives, all the wives wanting their alimony."

"How many wives is it, George?"

"Three," he sang out, "three in this country. When I was a boy they introduced me to a rich girl. She was pretty and the daughter of a silversmith. Everyone wanted her; but she liked me. I married her and they wanted me to give up teaching at the university and become a country gentleman. I had a horse. I went riding every day; I galloped. I was angry, furious. I caught fish in the river and roasted them, so as not to go home to lunch. My father-in-law wore white trousers and a straw hat and jingled the money in his pockets. I wanted to travel; I got my passport. With this you travel far and wide, my boy, he said, jingling the money in his pocket." George noisily jingled the money in his pocket, fiercely, with a philistine laugh. "This is your passport. Make this and you need no more. My father-in-law went to business late, and as soon as he got there, he telephoned home, What is there for lunch? If they changed the menu, they called him back. My wife was charming. She played the piano well, she painted portraits. I couldn't stand it. I explained to her: You are charming, but I don't want to be married. I left. I have a son twenty-four years old," he said with some pride. "And I have one somewhere in France, fifteen years old—if he is alive. I have two sons. I don't know where they are. My wife divorced me. The second time I was not married." This embarrassed him. "I came here before the war and I was fascinated by the American girl, so free, so frank, like a boy, delicious and earning her own living, saying what she liked: her independence was charming. The old ones are conventional, stupid. I married an old one first, that was Alice, she was twenty-five. She behaved best. She got married again and never bothered me. Then that little angel-face, that campus queen, that little brat who knew nothing, Sully: her name was Sullivan. Sully

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knew nothing. Whenever I said the most ordinary thing, remarks you can find in Ricardo or Adam Smith, she thought it was communist. She denounced me as a Red, when it became the fashion, because of her stupid ignorance and because she fell for my agent," he said, suddenly rolling his r's. "And then Barby. I am only just divorced from Barby. You see, I can marry Renee. She can have me when she wants me."

"I wish I could help," said Martin, somewhat drily, "but I can't."

"Women think I can take anything," complained George, "I look so healthy, no one believes I'm in trouble. I keep wondering if I'm very ill but the doctor says I'm well. The women pile up their troubles and unload them on to me. And Barby! Barby thinks I'm just there to be r-robbed, a big golden plough-ox to be kept at work. The sort of ox that soon earns a farm for the farmer and his wife; but he must be kept at work. There are two wives living off me now, and I'm so strong it does not matter. Serves me right, the women think. He wanted all those wives, the men think. But that isn't it. I didn't. I wanted to get married. I fell in love with each; and each one," he said, getting red and shouting, "did not love me; or only as children love. Marriage was an outing. Papa would buy the candy and the ride on the loop-the-loops. I can pay. Don't worry about my health. And look too," he said bending his large bronze-red head, "I have open scratches on my scalp, behind my ear and another somewhere and they won't heal. They came in Lausanne. I thought it was the lack of iodine in the lake water. I wrote to my friend Bercovici who sent me an infallible ointment which worked for everyone else, not for me. I tried sulfa drugs and penicillin: everything is bad for me. I'm a drug-rejector. At first they work; then they don't. I don't do all the work I should. I'm exhausted. And I look like a prize-fighter. What do you think, Laura?" he said on a gentle touching note.

"You don't eat enough."

Presently he sat down and ate something, though he worried about his diet through the meal. After eating he became calmer and began to discuss some economic questions in

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which he and Martin were interested. He paused and said to Laura, "You don't use that other room, do you? I see there's a bed in it."

"No. You mean, get Renee here?"

Martin said, looking uneasy, "How do you know the lame friend won't come after her?"

"Yes," said George, "it is too much to ask. I must solve it myself. She would come at once if I would have children. I told her she's ignorant. She's just a wax doll made by a hundred hands. Do you want to start out and make another wax doll? I said. Young women, girls want children because they haven't forgotten their dolls. The old women talk it into them; they're cunning and spiteful. Wait till you have the troubles I had. Barby was the same. I wouldn't let her. It would have turned her into a drudge, a char, a babysitter. I will not live in the house with a char. I can't have that; I must work. I can't even stop for regular meals or regular sleep."

He thrust his hands through his hair and began pulling his curls. "They immediately subordinate your life to the needs of a feeble little idiot, who can't walk or talk or think or listen or love, and can scarcely eat." He shrugged. "That is the worst of these young girls: they do such crazy things, they're ignorant of life; and I have not time to argue with them. I get married; and then I must work."

The telephone rang. It was Barbara, George's third American wife. "Is George there?" she demanded.

"Yes."

"What's he doing there?"

"Talking to Martin."

"Who else is there?"

"No one."

"I know what he's doing, he's telling you about me, inventing lies, hundreds of crazy lies, he's complaining about me."

"No, he isn't, Barby."

"Tell him to come to the phone."

George had an angry conversation with Barby, then turned, "Barby says she's coming over with a crowd."

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"You'd better go, George. I've had such a day—I don't know what there is about the Ides of March. People came all day and I had to go out. Let me talk to her."

Laura, who feared scenes, asked Barby not to come. "George is going out for a coffee with Martin."

Barby became very suspicious. She heckled Laura for a moment; and then said, "I'm here with a gang and I'm bringing them over with me. I'm not letting George stay there and tell lies about me. We'll make him come out of there. We're all coming over." She spoke to the friends; and the noise of drunken hilarious men was heard. "He won't get away with it; neither will you."

"I don't want you, Barby; now don't come."

"I'm coming and we'll rough up the place if you don't let George go."

Laura telephoned the hall porter saying that a crowd was coming, intending to make trouble. "Don't open the doors for them." Before a visitor could reach their corridor, the hall porter had to operate two switches, opening two sets of doors.

"You're going abroad," said George, looking at the large trunk, half-full, which Laura had been packing. "I've got to go abroad, not only for my work but to get away from Barby. She's the worst of all. I'll do better over there; I'll get in first on the big crime stories that break over there. I must get a fast car like the one Barby and I had in Washington. We scooped everybody. I know four or five languages, I can take good photographs and I know some of the police. I don't depend on sleepy ten-dollar hacks like other journalists. I've posted my story by ten in the morning."

He paused, pulled anxiously at his hair. "That little tramp Barby is after me to divide up everything; that means give her everything because she needs it. My second wife Sully is going round telling all the agents and editors that I'm a Red. I said to her, Don't you want me to make money? She's dedicated! What a beautiful girl she was! One long fair curl hanging over her shoulder, braided trousers and a little white mess jacket, and a soft peach face. Barby is collaborating with her in

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secret; though Barby is not such a fool. It's to annoy me," he shouted. He sprang up, "My God, in this country some schoolgirl only has to say so, some peach-faced all-American child. I worked for the government in the war, I did real service. For her, that makes me an undercover agent. Why am I a Red? I speak Russian for one thing. It's easy for a Bulgarian to speak Russian. I did translations of documents for the information service; some of them were secret. I went with the US Army to concentration camps and spoke to Russian prisoners. And now she says I'm a Red. That makes it very difficult for me. I must go abroad anyway. You never saw such a girl," he said with regret, "a lovely soda shop date-queen, cute and earnest and womanly, who knows nothing, no-thing! If you say the welfare state is a good thing, it keeps the people quiet, she doesn't hear the second part; and you are a Red. My God! She has it in for me. Alice was good to me. But these others, these little tramps, they divorce me and they are out to get me. Why? Why is that? They owe it to themselves. If I get away too easily, they're not standing up for the rights of American women; I must be punished. And I am good to them. I give them all my money. I have to work day and night—my mother has money in Switzerland; it's there but I can't get it. I've got to go there and see a man. And I must go to Sofia. I've been there, I had no trouble. That makes me a Red, too."

"Well, what is all this about being a Red?"

"It's poppycock, malarkey," he said furiously. "They're making themselves important; it's vengeance. Sully and Barb are doing it for the money and the excitement, and the vengeance. They're rivals but they're combining to r-ruin me. American girls are bloodthirsty. Their honor is in sucking a man dry; then they throw out the corpse. Why I have known women here who destroy a man's happiness and faith in himself, ruin his career, divorce him, turn his children against him, blacken his name to all his friends, suck him dry and then marry him again to show they own him."

He stood with his head, back and shoulders straight. He murmured, "Of course, they are beautiful; but only beautiful to work their game. And Barby is a spiteful lying vengeful

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little thief—she has just taken my typewriter and chair and my rugs. All the sweet young girls in the American high school plays are cute little cheats and liars, getting round everyone. They're taught it. It's in their mothers' milk. Barby is delicious," he cried out in rage. "Delightful! Winning! But only to torture and curse you. I loathe her. And if she finds out about Renee she will rush right over there and tell Renee disgusting lies and turn her against me. She is on the trail now; she knows there is something. She is a little devil, a little goldheaded fiend."

He turned to Martin and said forcibly, "In Europe I won't be pestered and nagged by this swarm of little-girl gadflies. I have nowhere here to live. I have this apartment on University Place, up four flights, a walk-up, but a good roomy apartment at the top, where I have worked for three years; and now Barby is there. I won't stay there with her. I told her, We're divorced; you have no right to stay here. She said, I want a place to stay; I am doing business in New York. I said, Go away. She said, I'll sleep on the divan, I don't want to sleep with you. And the next evening she came in late, she turned up with a reverend she is running round with and they slept there in my bed, while I was still finishing my work; and I had to get out. I walked the streets, and I had more work to do. She is there now—" he waved his arms and flushed. "I ought to call the police. She is stealing everything, taking all my photographs—"

"Your photographs!"

"You know the room I had, under lock and key, the double room downstairs, dug in the ground, with a darkroom. It was full of crime photographs from my cases. I brought them here, and she is stealing them. They're dynamite, not for the public, and they're valuable. Some of them are police photographs. I haven't insured them and I can't call the police."

"Why not?"

"I'm not supposed to have them. They slipped them to me —or to Barby—out there, not here. We were working together. We were married and she wouldn't let me say we were married. There was a police officer crazy about her and she

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worked on him. They hated me. I had to pass as her bodyguard. That was reasonable, with the places she had to go and the hours she worked. The little wicked thief claims they are all hers; and she always snuggles up to anyone; she gets people on her side. And the police would confiscate them anyway. If not, she wants me to pay her for them; and she wants everything, prints, serialization, second and third rights—she will ruin me. And she says she needs money for her business; that is why she is doing it; but I know she wants it for her uncle who is hiding from the police because he is involved in some deal about fake art masterpieces. She is always keeping some lame duck."

The telephone rang, and George said, "Don't answer it; it's Barby."

Barby's sharp voice said, "Laura, is George still there? I'm coming over. I'm not having him tell lies about me. Is Martin there, or are you alone? Are you alone with George? I'm coming over. I've got a big bunch of friends here, we're at Elgar Mancando's and I'm bringing them all over. They were all in Washington when George was running around there with the blonds and they want to see I get justice."

"I have nothing here, Barby, no whiskey, no food, nothing. George and Martin are just going out."

"They're not going out! We're coming over!"

Laura telephoned the doorman again to keep them out. "Yes," he said.

George Paul was sitting with a stubborn confused face. His face cleared, became gentler. He said plaintively, "I was walking along the beach in California; and I was fu-r-rious. I had a furious quarrel with Sully and I told her I was leaving her. She was working for my agent; then she fell for him and stole my story and said it was his. She looked like milk and honey. And as soon as she falls for him she goes into court and swears, swear-rs on the Bible in which she believes, as cool as a cucumber, that she was with him when he wrote it and helped him. It was a quiet day, a weekday, hardly anyone on the beach. I saw a big sports car rolling along the beach; blue. It stopped and a little girl got out of it with a long dog. At

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first I thought it was a boy. She wore a little loose-fitting denim suit and had short yellow hair. And she began to run towards me exercising the dog, which had long hair like feathers and a bow back, and loped along lamely. It could hardly run—a wolfhound. I stopped and looked and could not take my eyes off this beautiful little boy-girl. When she came near me, I saw she was crying. She was running crying, and the dog was loping along behind very weakly, trembling and dropping on its haunches; and getting up again.

"I said to her, Isn't your dog too sick to run? She ran past me blubbering, and as I turned after her, she pushed me away with her arm and ran on. I sat down. Presently she came walking back, helping the dog, and when she came up to me she dropped down in the sand, made a smooth patch in the sand and began drawing the dog which was lying on its side, panting; and she told me about it. You know the stars and starlets want pets for photographs; and usually dogs. They don't know what to do with them; it's only for the newspapers. Then if they flop or they move or go away, back to their gas station or hometown or up to the top, they leave the dog behind, sometimes in the backyard. There was a scandal, a grisly tale. They said there was a wolf about that ate things at night. It was one of these dogs, an Alsatian, that had been left behind.

"Barby was living with Elgar Mancando, in his little house in one of the glens; and sleeping with him although he was engaged to Miriam Green and waiting for his divorce to marry Miriam. He had one or two other girls then. That is why she was crying. She wanted to marry him. He is still unmarried and she believes in him still. Barb was miserable and wanted a pet, a monkey; and she heard of this place where you could get abandoned pets cheap. She went there, a little storefront, a dark store. The man said he had a monkey in the backyard. They went through a narrow dark passage with tiers of animal cages on both sides; and as they went through one of the piles of cages fell over, and she saw a starved dog in the bottom cage. It was a large dog curled round to fit in the cage; and it just lay there. Don't you feed the animals? she

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asked the man. Then the man told her how the dogs and other pets were left there by the stars. Sometimes they paid a few weeks ahead, sometimes only one week and said they were coming back; but he knew he would never get any more. If someone wants them, I sell them cheap, he said.

"Barby couldn't bear to see the dog, so she bought it instead of the monkey, though the man said it was dying. She brought it home to Mancando's in her car; and she took it out every day to exercise it; or she gave it to the writer Billy Exmouth. She and Mancando were keeping Billy Exmouth then; he was living with anyone. No one believed in him, but Barby. He had a manuscript written in sewer language which he sold and which made him rich. Barby still believes in him. Barby gave him food, and he took the dog out every day for exercise and no one could say who was the more miserable.

"Barby told me all this and took me back to her car. She was cooking Mancando all the exotic dishes he liked, but she did not believe he would marry her. So she had made up her mind to marry Billy Exmouth, though she had read the manuscript, all smut and excrement. I mean it," he shouted, "that is what it was. I prevented her. She married me."

He said seriously, "You see, even at that age, sixteen, she was earning big money doing sensation stories. California's full of them. An undertaker left a shed full of unburied corpses and went out to California on the money. A retired man knocked off his wife's head somewhere in New Mexico on the way out, because he calculated there wasn't enough money for both. There was a man who could live without air and who burrowed holes under the buildings in a business block in Los Angeles, and lived on the food and the cash registers. There was another man who fished ties with a fishing rod through the mailboxes in men's stores, and sold them. There are plenty of stories; and there's a market for them. You must have something extra, get there first, have a fast car, be a good photographer, have good shock photographs; and you must be friendly with the police who may tip you off.

"Barby had all that, but she needed a good photographer, so she took me in. I was a teacher in Sofia, but a good amateur

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photographer; I won prizes. I was a newcomer here, so I developed my sideline. I thought I could work in the studios; I had special cameras; but they didn't want art photography. So I went out on my own. She let me use her car. But she stipulated that our marriage must be secret. First she said her parents would not like me; then she admitted that she had admirers in the police. I noticed that. She was dainty and daredevil; and some of them were wild about her. So I had to sit there at the wheel, while they pawed her and eyed her. The police did not like me at all, even incognito, as her partner; but going where she went at all hours, they knew she needed a strong-arm man. It made me fu-r-rious. They'd stop us anywhere to give her some information and look at me with contempt. I wasn't always at the wheel. She drove that big car like a racing-driver. So I sat there. In the end they got used to me; I even got on with them. That was how we got the big stories; the tip-off and racing with the fast car, and the photographs. The police gave us some photographs too; most you couldn't use and they weren't the sort to show young girls; but they took a pleasure and a pride in their rare specimens and they thought of Barby as one of them. They respected Barby more and more for her work and for liking them. I had this chamber of horrors; no one was allowed to enter. You remember I wouldn't let you in? I had to promise that no one would ever see them. When I came to New York I burned some, gave some back and brought the others. Barby came with me; but she couldn't work in with the New York police; and she wanted to write. So now when she's desperate, lending money to the reverend and trying to keep up with Mancando, who's wasting an inheritance his aunt left him, she wants the photographs and the typewriter for her stories. And I suspect her," he said indignantly, "there are cranks who pay anything for that sort of photograph."

At this moment the doorman spoke on the house phone and said a lot of people were coming up. "Don't, don't, John; I asked you not to," but before Laura had finished speaking there was a loud noise of voices and the grinding of feet in the stone corridor. "They've got in," said Laura, frightened.

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Martin gave a timid grin; George sat flushing.

The bell rang. Laura opened the door. A wedge-shaped group of men stood there, with a small fair girl in front, head lowered, fists doubled. Of the men, Laura knew only Mancando, a tall fair personable man-about-town.

"You can't come in," said Laura. "I have no room and no food and I'm packing."

Barby, head lowered, started forward and led the men into the room. There was a small square entry. Barby and the men choked their way through, all pushing together; Laura retreating before them; and they flowed through the archway into the room beyond where, without greeting anyone, the men began laughing, passing remarks, fingering things, lounging against tables and walls, and surveying the Italian-style courtyard from the windows.

"How long have you been here telling lies about me, Pie-otter?" squealed Barby, running forward and facing George, who had gotten up and was standing by the table, half turned from the room, his handsome rosy face composed now.

"I have not been talking about you, Barby; and telling no lies. What did you come for? I am going out with Martin. Why did you bring these people here?" he continued, with more heat. He looked across at Elgar Mancando, who had seated himself by Laura. His large pale soft hands lay loosely on his thighs, drawing attention to them; and the hand nearer Laura began to move towards her. Mancando's face began to lower towards her with obsequious insulting flattery. Laura got up and handed round glasses of California red wine from a gallon jar. "No scotch?" said one of the men. "Go out and get some," and taking a ten-dollar bill from his billfold he handed it to her. Laura laughed and pushed it back. The man was puzzled. The others looked on in silence, as if waiting for a scene to begin.

Barby seated herself in a knot of seated men, on a low cane stool which she removed from under a looking glass in the inner hall.

She said, "Pie-otter is going round town telling lies about me; he says I am stealing his photographs. Those photographs

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belong to me; I had to kiss cops to get them. That typewriter is an old one he doesn't need and I do need. When we divorced he did not share as he was told to. He was told to divide up even the coffee. Pie-otter would never have got the big stories at all if he hadn't had me helping him. I was right in business when he moved in on me. I had the connections, I had the car. I took in Pie-otter because I fell for him, I fell for his big baby blue eyes and a big baby blue tie he had on one day. And he thought he was a bigshot, but he was a big blue-eyed goof baby, weren't you, goof baby? And Pie-otter let me down and ran around with Miriam Green when Elgar threw her out, because she had big baby tears in her eyes: he can't resist it. You know you did. And you did, too, Elgar; you threw her out with tears in her eyes. And I believed Pie-otter was my man. You were rotten to me, Pie-otter."

"Don't call me that," exclaimed George Paul.

"Isn't that your name? Your name's Pie-otter Pay-vell. His mother called him Pie-otter."

"Barby," shouted George, in a husband's voice, "you know it's Pyotr and you can say it as well as I can. Stop it now."

"Pyotr," she said, rather faintly, bending over and looking up at him; then she sat up straight, laughed, "Pie-otter. Pie-otter and Pay-vell Fornyehkatorovich," and she burst out into a rattling laugh, and the men laughed. She cried out, "Get after him, get after Pie-otter. He let me down and stole my work; and get after them, they're sitting there all evening swallowing his lies; and get after her, she's holding his hand and listening to his lies. Laura, you were at my house in the Glen and all the time I suppose you were listening to his lies about me; and all the time he was rolling his big baby blue eyes at Miriam Green and slee-eeping with her; and anyone who would love him. He is always looking for someone to love him."

"Stop telling lies," shouted George; "stop being a cat and a bad girl, Barby. Go away and take the men with you. I am talking to my friend Martin."

"Yes, a very sudden visitation, quite an incursion," said

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Martin, chuckling and looking around at the sneering curious faces. Barby was now sitting on the priest's lap. "A very sudden visitation, he-he, an incursion yes, ha-ha; but I see you are getting some red ink, anyway," and he repeated, gleefully, "some California red ink anyway."

"Martin Dean," said Mancando standing by the bookcase and smiling at Laura, "the only man I know who carries his own echo with him; it's so good, such a treat, he encores himself, he sings the song twice over, in case you might have missed the first fine careless rapture."

The others laughed or sat dully; but Martin who could not comprehend ill nature and did not know what was meant, nor that this was against himself, looked around merrily to catch the drift, to join in, with a smile, half-whispered, "first fine careless rapture, first fine careless rapture," rubbed his hands, and laughed with joy. He sensed that there was a difficult situation; he did not know what it was; but he tried to get over it by laughing. He said, "Go on, boys, have a good time; drink the red ink, come on Laura, sit down, join the brigade, the boys want you to be along." He rolled the fun and good will out of his mouth; he was tickled by what he said; he kept laughing, a long golden laugh from the south.

"How can you be so rude?" said Laura to Mancando. "Do you go to other people's houses to insult them?"

Mancando was surprised. Barby answered from the priest's lap. "Yes, we do. We go round town insulting everybody who listens to Pie-otter's lies. And I know he has been telling you a big sob story about some girl, some girl in trouble my age he's fallen for. Big Brother Pie-otter has to make the world right for her by falling in love with her and marrying her."

The party had broken up a little. The men were insulting Martin who, talking fast, did not hear their gibes, and yet had a strange expression, like a dawn muddled by clouds. He could not believe it, but he heard it. They were telling him to get his teeth straightened, to have them cut down, not to sharpen them on his tonsils, that he must strain his soup through them. He had big creamy teeth and a wide mouth.

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Mancando, a liberal-minded polished literary man who thought literary people had the right to do anything, led the insults; the others without his talent, tried and failed.

The one they called the reverend, a Rumanian priest, gay, tall and elegant, in a long robe, rose from his seat as the baiting became ragged, picked up Barby, put her on her feet. He said to Laura, "Have you some ikra? What a pity. I should have brought some for your company. Let us cook something." Laura and the priest went to the kitchenette, where they looked through the cupboards. "Come out to Chicago and stay in our convent," said the priest, politely, "and we will cook for you both. We will drink Rumanian wine and everything will amuse you. We have gardens, a swimming pool. The convent is a very gay place. We are gayer than those here." And very slightly his dark face smiled, and with his eyes he indicated the ill-tempered group.

In the sitting room behind them shouting had begun. Elgar was shouting insults at a strange man, a dark hairy small man bending forward and looking keenly at his insulter; and another man, a tall strong out-of-town dandy, was taking the last of the wine and returning to the first insults, "You open your mouth so wide I can see the back of your tonsils, you got a tooth as long as your tongue," he shouted merrily. Barby was mauling George calling him Pie-otter; while Martin, who had at last admitted the insults, had turned away to George and, while laughing at Barby, was talking in his clear baritone. He was talking, laughing, turning up his big eyes, opening his wide white-toothed jaws, lifting his tongue and open throat to meet the light, to meet the audience as he thought of them, tossing words, ideas, jokes sideways towards the people, waiting for them to join in a good-natured way. His face blazed with excitement. He was continuing with George Paul a conversation they had begun a while before; and in his excitement and with George's purposeful attention, he became noisier. He was saying, "Wall Street has no wall, Broad Street, no broads, there are no Germans in Nassau Street, Broadway itself at the point of Manhattan is narrow, there are no pines on Pine Street, no Cedars

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on Cedar, no liberty except the right to take out insurance on Liberty, few maidens on Maiden Lane, and in Hanover Square no memories of the house that once empested America. India House is a place for guzzling brokers, but no cinnamon from the Orient, no sweet williams in William Street, Coentjes Slip has no more conies and only the well-groomed broker's typist who never slips. Whitman chanted spires but these are buried in walls of cash and even the substitute for cash, the heavenly spirit of cash and the immense cash-register bastion once the breath of hatred to every balladist of the prairies is today..."

A silence had fallen. Some were baffled, some bored, all felt flat, as Martin, apparently without taking breath, yielded to his genius.

The Rumanian priest reappeared, darkly smiling. "Barby, come over to our place and I'll make you ikra."

"That's good, that's better than etchings," said one of the men.

"Where's the Scotch?" said another in a brutal tone. He had been drinking out of his own bottle, now empty. He got up and lumbered over to Martin, "Where's the Scotch, mister? Where have you hidden it?"

"I haven't any Scotch, my friend," said Martin genially.

"Everyone has Scotch," insisted the man, "where the hell is it?"

"None here; we don't drink it," cried Martin cheerfully.

"What the hell kind of a dump, let's get out of here," said the man; and he led the others towards the door.

"Martin, let me talk to you about the seven years' crisis in Switzerland, 1929 to 1936," said George Paul seriously. "And what about the deposits there now? I should like to write an article too about the deposits in the U.S.A., enemy-alien deposits in other names which will never be returned. I am told there were fortunes in German and other refugee money put in Switzerland and a lot of them are sitting tight. I'm not sure I'm not in that boat myself. I shall have to go there. And I've heard something. There's something blowing up—a big scandal with international names in it. I must go."

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Instantly Martin said, "That crisis shook Switzerland. She had considerable investments in America. Her banks were involved in German industries—"

"For crying out loud, let's get out of here," said the rough visitor pushing the others.

"Come over to my place," the priest was saying; "I share with three other fathers—"

"Come on," said Barby, catching Elgar's coat sleeve and pulling him along the corridor. The men milled around her. Urging and arguing she plunged down the steep stone stairs, running ahead of them, out first, impatient.

Back in the room the two friends were still discussing Switzerland. They did not appear to notice that all was now still. Laura began packing again.

Paris: early fifties.

They unexpectedly had a call from George Paul. He was working on a feature story of the German occupation and had to come out to St. Germain-en-Laye where the German High Command had been quartered and where a secret headquarters, fully provisioned, staffed and armed had been built into a cliff. It could still be seen. Everyone in St. Germain knew about it. Indeed they were full of information, since they had all served the German occupants in some manner.

George was expected for lunch, but did not get there till four in the afternoon; when the gate bell jangled, the dog barked violently and Manette, the young maid with long hair, long apron and slippers ran out to let him in. With her, young and beautiful, but a servant, he was rude and imperious; and imperious to Colonel de Charleville, owner of the villa. Colonel de Charleville, always described as a "fine man of soldierly bearing," or else *un beau gendarme*, came round in gardening clothes to greet him. George turned his back to him and spoke to the Deans who had run down from their upstairs flat.

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"That's the Colonel," they said.

"The kind of colonel who let in the Germans," said George.

"You're late, George."

"The train didn't want to get here, French inefficiency, they have no schedules, no program, the railroad men don't work, they have no organization; or else they took me for a German, like everyone else, and led me astray on purpose, in their crafty *bonhomme* style. Since the Germans left, there's no one to give orders to them and they're running round in circles. The Americans, of course, can't do it. They have no idea of social order. Their scheme is a combination of handouts and junkets; spies nesting and sapping each other's nests. I'm surprised they didn't derail that train. It was a jinxed ride. If they had had their heads where they ought to be and not in a pot of wine, they wouldn't have had the Germans here at all. It was pure inefficiency and lack of strategy and foresight."

"And treachery in the elegant salons," said Martin.

"Even in the train they were looking at me. A man said aloud, If he's speaking French, he's a German. Fine logic. That's what the Germans told them, We are the only ones who speak your beautiful language correctly: the English, the Americans, the rest—all illiterates. The girl said, He's Danish. I was choking but I spoke up, I'm no German, no Alsatian, no Dane; I'm an American.

"I didn't know where to get breakfast," he said tramping upstairs. "There's a coffee shop in the rue St. Honoré where I had breakfast before the war and it's still there. It's run by an Englishman, good tea and the coffee is strong. The best coffee in Paris. The train was at ten o'clock on the indicator..."

While Laura was preparing food he told them a long, extraordinary story of his difficulties in getting there. "I nearly went back to Paris. But I had to get this story. Laura, you look wonderful And is this the villa the Germans lived in and stole from?"

He followed Laura into the kitchen asking urgently about his health, what he should eat. The bread was very bad; he could hardly get any milk.

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"Where's Madeline, your American girl who was typing for you?"

"She's left me: she went back to her husband who's got a job in Unesco. I've got to do everything for myself. I don't mind the housework; I don't need a woman for that. I type everything: but it's the copying. I have no time. I have to keep digging up new features; and I have to get the material. This project now is taking days. There ought to be someone copying it out."

His wants, his clothes were simple. He wore sports clothes, had one pinstriped English wool suit. He wore nylon shirts and shorts, green and white, that he could wash himself.

"Your eyes look tired."

"It's nothing," he said hastily, "the blood rushes to my head and stays there; and I feel the heat."

"Martin will take you round the town, and you come back and eat a big steak and we'll see. You can get a room at the hotel in the market square. We went there for you."

"If you think so," he grumbled dubiously. "No, no, I've got to get back to Paris. I've an obligation to someone—someone I don't trust. I must ask your advice too. That's another thing that's troubling me. It's a young girl."

When they returned and were having coffee, he sat in the chair, his rosy face in the daylight, and he complained, "I nearly brought her along to leave her with you where she'd be safe. I'm sorry I didn't. Barby's in town and is making a nuisance of herself. I don't want her to find out where my apartment is. She's always breaking into my lodgings. It's not that I'm afraid she'll insult the girl. It's that I'm afraid the girl will run away." He said, in his nervousness, gir-rl and r-run. He leaned towards them, trustfully. "She looks fifteen, a small girl with a new haircut and bright lipstick, like a schoolchild who made herself up in the cloakroom before she ran out the school gate. She has eyes that make you uneasy, that look straight at you with a smile and then seem to peel off; and there's another eye underneath, sizing you up, a human eye that you see for a second, and then the bright enamel eye is back. Expressions flick across her face as if she

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were trying to find one that will suit. I don't know if it's other phases of her personality, or if she is too young to have a personality. She had a room in a little hotel and ate all her meals there just as if she were at home. Then at the end of three days they gave her the bill because she had nothing but a handbag and was coming back with packages from stores. She paid them a little and promised the rest. After that, she spent a week wandering about the streets and gardens. I saw her a couple of days ago standing outside a little hotel near the Lion de Belfort talking to the proprietor, who was saying, No, no, no, miss."

George's face showed an older grain, more flesh: he looked paternal. He said energetically, irritated, "The child flickers like surface water. Evidently she feels she is irresistible, a temptress. She was following a middle-aged man about the garden outside the Luxembourg, near my rooms. She was telling him some story. He made a joke and left her. She spotted me sitting near her on a chair and came straight over to me. She came right up and said, You see, my checks are late in coming. I changed my address and I expect the hotel is holding them up because I did not pay in full. And I expect my fiancé; but he is not allowed to cross the frontier; he is having trouble. He will come. And I wonder if you know the owner of a nightclub. I know that's the way they earn money. I can sing and dance.

"I got her a little room in a hotel near me and I had a talk to the hotel manager. The girl's name is Lili Charabas, she comes from Lausanne and she is eighteen; so she wrote in the hotel book. Yesterday, the hotel manager and I searched her room. There was never anything left in her room and she wouldn't tell about her parents or home. But yesterday we found a little diary with notes in it, like: *Had a chocolate sundae. Danced with a nice boy at the Buffalo. Went to the movies. Had my hair washed.* Eventually we found a telephone number on a slip of paper. I knew it was a Swiss telephone number. We spoke to the girl's uncle at Morges, near Lausanne. He said it's her third escapade. She just turned fifteen and wants to live with men. That's what she says. She got hold of a man

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at home; but she turned cold, dropped him and looked for another. She promises to meet them all privately, but she never meets anyone, never keeps appointments and hangs back from kisses. She won't even let me take her elbow," he said peevishly. "She used to go to a certain hotel to telephone, always telephoning men, especially married men. I believe she thinks it's safe to do so. Then she took to roaming the country, taking trains and buses. I can't let her roam about Paris; and the uncle won't send for her. Her family is finished with her. What sort of a man is that?"

He was standing at the window, looking down into the garden.

"That's Colonel de Charleville, *un beau gendarme*, as they say. As a young brainless fellow he was a Spanish officer who, because of his connections, married a Marquise, calls himself Marquis. He's nice with the women; and he has a Frenchman's finger in cotton wool in a box. The Germans gave it to him and told him the Russians cut it off for the ring. He believes it. The German officers took over his villa, built themselves a deep dugout in his garden and allowed him and the Marquise to use it. He thinks they were very correct. When the Germans were on the run, they stopped long enough to take his household linen, tableware, pictures and carpets. But, says he, they were very correct."

"I was in Passy," said George furiously, "I know them. The Americans were parading. All the sloths and slugs, the termites of Passy were out in the street. *Comme c'est bien! Tellement corrects—impeccables!* They think me German, do they? I turned to them and said, Do you find every army of occupation impeccable? I'm an American—I'm ashamed of you."

He took a few steps about the room. "God, look at his pictures! Such pictures haven't been seen since Napoleon the Little. Perhaps she's run away, wandered off. Laura, could you come back with me and get her? I can't sleep with all these problems. I've got her there and I'm the sole person in the world responsible for her," he exclaimed irascibly. "What's the matter with that painting? On the wall there?

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You see, it's poorly lighted. When I am near the window I see the Duc de Guise—"

"Yes, it's the Duc de Guise. The Colonel is very loyal to extinct powers."

"Yes, yes, but when I am here, near the divan, I can see a screaming *pétroleuse* with a liberty bonnet, underneath. I can see her perfectly. Like France," he exclaimed. He stood in the window against the light looking towards the forest. "What's going on in that chateau over there? There are dozens of people and they are loading things in the yard."

"They waterproof raincoats over there. You can see the colors."

"Yes, I see the boxes now. What is that house at the corner?"

"It's a house that's shut in the daytime and open at night."

"Where does this street go to?"

"To the country. They come past early in the morning, three times a week. The food is good here, better than Paris."

"I hate Paris, the food is so bad," he said, worried. His face had many aspects. His eyes at this moment appeared cavernous, dark-circled. Pouches of flesh were forming along the stout jawbone. "There's Barby and this girl from Morges—Lili—and that typist I must find, and I have to get a fast car; I've ordered a Mercedes-Benz and it hasn't come yet—and I have to go to Rome to see Easter Pascuale..."

"The American gangster!"

"Yes, I met him in Rome once already. He doesn't meet people; but I met him. And he isn't what they say. He told me everything. He's not engaged in drugs and prostitution. He had a big organisation in the U.S.A. and part of it got involved with drugs and prostitution without his knowledge. He fired the goons who were in it; then they ganged up against him and someone informed. He gave it all up. He said I could have the whole story if I'd write the truth. He consented to give me three interviews to write the truth for the American press. I can sell it for six thousand dollars; and I can get my car then. I hate these little Renaults. I gave a deposit for a Jaguar, a British car, the best in the world; I

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know the tester; and I couldn't bear to have a German car. But the Germans are an efficient people and no strikes and they'll work for you eighteen hours a day for nothing; for a pack of cigarettes. They only want to work. They've had enough hard times. The French only want to strike and drink red wine. As soon as you strike a red wine country, even Alsace, you find they won't work. And you can tell them from the road—" he continued, his voice rising, "from the car. They're red! They look red, red faces, red hands—the wine's in them, they're full of it. Just wineskins. I jabbed my tiepin in one one day and it came out red, redder than nature, wine red. If you stuck a knife into one it would pour out of him like a knife in a goatskin. It runs out of their fingers," he cried, shaking his broad hairy hand in the air, fingers spread.

"What are all those dogs? What is that big brute who jumped at me and put his muzzle in my face like a black wolf?"

"That's Fanfan the housedog and those are his brothers and sisters. They're Greenlands."

"She's a very pretty girl," he said discontentedly, looking down at the servant, "but sluttish; I don't like that long hair in a horsetail and she has a slippery smile. What am I to do, Martin? Laura? I'm in trouble. I had to keep my apartment in New York; I can't pay hotel rates when I'm there. And now Barby has taken it over; she is there, she is doing business there with her—gigolos," he said furiously. "Then she followed me over!"

His thick flaming hair folded itself into shells. The grey in it was hidden. His skin was rosy, his neck broader on thickening shoulders. He had loosened his tie and his broad stout chest and strong arms stuck out of the shirt. He was still summer, strong hot summer. "I won't keep it any longer," he said, "though it is so cheap. I've paid, but I'll give notice. And now she wants me to help her here. She's making a big mistake. We're divorced. I wrote to her, I'm not your man. I need certain conditions for my work; quiet, peace. I used to eat at a pension round the corner. It's for Swiss students;

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it's run by a German Swiss. The Germans are the same everywhere. They eat swill. They eat in platters, troughs I call them, piled to the top with sour cabbage and one sour sausage on top! At the end of the meal all the troughs are empty but mine; and those hills of sour grass and those lakes of sour sauce are inside; and inside them is buried the sour sausage. And because I speak German everyone sidles up to me and starts propaganda. It's frightful. It's torment. I don't know what to do. But I must eat."

He said in a gentle sad voice, turning to Laura, "What am I to do, Laura? Advise me."

"Tell them you're Viennese."

"No."

"You were brought up in Vienna."

"I am not Viennese," he said, squeaking with rage. "I never saw the Viennese golden heart; I hate Vienna because it is German. All over central Europe the traces of the Ger-rman br-rute. What did their music and their philosophy do for them? I hate their vile language and I am ashamed I speak it correctly. I am an American! In the war I fought for the U.S.A. and it was a pleasure, because it was against the Germans. Oh, you fought them; but you don't know them as I do. You have to know them intimately to hate them properly. Why didn't you thr-rottle everyone of them? You had them. There is not one good one."

"That is race prejudice, pure, absurd race prejudice," said Martin.

"The Germans are no race, but a mess," said George. "What am I to do with this girl? I have to get my work done. I can't put her on the train for Lausanne. I can't hand her over to the police. I can't be in Switzerland for several months. I have a book lined up, about refugees. I hate them but I will get money for it. I interview refugees, from Eastern Germany or Russia, I listen to their ridiculous stories, and then I write a good book, *I was a Refugee from Stalin*, or some such thing. I'll get three thousand dollars for it; more perhaps, five thousand. I have to sell outright because I need the money; and it could be a movie."

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"Perhaps Lili will be gone when you go back and you can forget her."

"I can't forget her. Besides she will be there. I asked Mrs. Greatranch to look after her."

"Is that the Mrs. Greatranch I met in New York? You met her at parties."

Still irritated, but laughing he said, "She bummed her way to London as soon as the war was over, went over in a freighter that was empty because it went to New York full of Scotch. You should have seen the wharves in wartime in New York. Nothing but cases of Scotch. They risked the Germans for that. Mrs. Greatranch was sick of New York. She had no money. She's not one of the multimillionaire Greatranches. She married one; he left her and they don't give her anything; and she won't sue. I'm not a highwayman, she says. She had to leave London because she got into the clutches of a society drug fiend, a doctor—a Jugoslav," he said with fury.

The Deans began to laugh. George became serious.

"Oh, he is safe; he just married a title. He went around poisoning everyone, getting people down with synthetics and getting women in his clut-ches, picking and choosing and at last he got one that suited him. He made plenty of money. He gave anyone drugs that came to him. When he first took Mrs. Greatranch for a patient, he thought she was one of the Greatranches; but he found out she had only a small annuity and he dropped her; and so she was able to escape. But she said, In London I was only a shuddering crying rag, freezing and hungry and unable to eat. She came to Paris without anything and came to me, and said, Geor-rge, I am going to shack down with you; I have nowhere to go. I've only a little room for my bed, a bathroom, and a sitting room where my files and photographs are and there is a sofa there. I must work out on the landing; for she is there now. So there she is and I can't turn her out. She doesn't know how to do anything. I look after her. I bring her her breakfast. Poor thing. I have gotten her to eat now. But I want a secretary who will do my typing. And I must make love to her. She expects it. But she is fifty! She did some typing for me and she is a good

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typist. But I don't like her to do it. And I have no room for myself."

"George, you have a woman ranch."

"I do not," he said indignantly, getting up and going to the window again. "I do not ask them to come and live with me. I don't love them. I need money. I have to work. I have these frightful headaches and stomachaches. What do you think it is?"

"You must wear glasses. And eat properly."

"But I am too hot headed. I must avoid alcohol and sugar and red meat. I must eat lightly."

Laura said, "A hot-headed man feels worse when he is hungry. When he eats, the blood goes from his head to his stomach."

"Do you think so?" said George hopefully.

"And lead a quieter life," said Martin with annoyance. "Women don't shack down with me. I don't find lunatic adolescents in the park. You must marry an older woman George and stick to her."

He stuck out his chin and an ugly look crossed his face. "Older women are good for aunts and mothers." Then afraid he had offended, he said, "But I had a very good housekeeper in Paris last year, an older woman who said she loved to look after me. You must eat more; yes, she told me that."

He moved about restlessly, "You see this is all a waste of time. A publisher in New York will give me this big lump sum for the confession book. I have a good title and I call myself Pavlovich; it has a good simple Slavic sound; humble, not too reliable. It is supposed to be the experiences of a man escaped from the East. It is a work of fiction but they will say it is true. It will sound good," he exclaimed. "Refugees are like pianists and dancers, they must all have Slavic names. It will be good, just the mixture of fiction and non-fiction that sells nowadays. But unfortunately, I must sell it outright and not have my name on it. I sold a story to a newspaper; and got more for letting the editor put his name on it. I can't wait for royalties and pyramiding rights. And perhaps it will be a best-seller, serial rights, TV."

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"Do you really think the Russian horror story still goes?"

"German," he said, "German. He went with the Russian army to Berlin, my Pavlovich. I don't mind anyway what I do to the Germans, even East Germans. Where was Buchenwald? Right next to Weimar, the home of culture. That's the picture of German life. Don't try to make me think it over," he exclaimed, gesturing towards Martin, "I need money for my Mercedes; I will get stories faster if I drive up in a Mercedes, they will know I am a crook then. And there are my wive-z, my ex-wive-z. And I suppose I must take back this silly little goose from Morges."

"She is sure to get into trouble; why bother?" said Martin.

"But there are so many terrible tragedies with young girls," said George, "I am afraid for her. I know too much."

"Is that why you marry the young girls?" asked Laura.

He straightened, looked shocked. "I would not harm a young girl. Besides, they want to marry me," he said. "They are glad to marry me. They love me—besides—you cannot trust them. You must make up their minds for them. If you don't marry them they would run off tomorrow or the next day. I must have peace for my work."

"But you don't have it, George: you have nothing but misery, disappointment and anxiety."

"Because they are little idiots, little ignorant gold-diggers," he exclaimed. "When I first went there and saw the glorious free little creatures, I nearly fell for every girl I saw. Then I married an old one, Alice, who was no good for me; and then Sully, she was twenty-two but she was like an old woman waging war against me all the time, always showing me up, misunderstanding everything and then—" He took steps about the room. "And I must get to Sofia to see my mother about the two houses there that are mine. Look at my eyes, Laura. They are ruby. Every time I lie down for a nap that happens. I get up with a headache. I am in trouble, my brains are boiling. I can't lead a quieter life; I have to live like this. Anyone in my profession who gets rooted becomes a humdrum hack. He rewrites stories others have uncovered, his price goes down, he is nothing and has nothing."

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"You love the excitement; you're a knight-errant," said Laura.

"Don't analyze me, don't criticize me—I'm built this way, this is the only way I can live. Any other way would be the way down to me. I'm looking for someone; I got out of it with Barby and I must find someone."

"What about Renee?" asked Martin.

"Renee?" he said, abstractedly, looking at the picture of the Duc de Guise.

"I never asked you what happened to Renee, the girl in New York. Three or four years ago, just before we sailed."

"She left me: she said she didn't want me," he exclaimed with sulky anger. "The women got her. I don't know where she is."

"You couldn't have saved her." said Laura.

George Paul looked at her seriously, the full cheek and neck, the side of his head with the mingled bronze and silver hair, all his solidity showing his age in its full splendor in the light. "I could have saved her; but it is too late—it's all over now. That's finished."

Presently they all three set out for the station, a long walk across the town.

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John Ashbery

The Bungalows

Impatient as we were for all of them to join us,
The land had not yet risen into view: gulls had swept the gray steel
towers away
So that it profited less to go searching, away over the humming earth
Than to stay in immediate relation to these other things—boxes, store
parts, whatever you call them—
Whose installedness was the price of further revolutions, so you knew
this combat was the last.
And still the relationship waxed, billowed like scenery on the breeze.

They are the same aren't they,
The presumed landscape and the dream of home
Because the people are all homesick today or desperately sleeping,
Trying to remember how those rectangular shapes
Became so extraneous and so near
To create a foreground of quiet knowledge
In which youth had grown old, chanting and singing wise hymns that
Will sign for old age
And so lift up the past to be persuaded, and be put down again.

The warning is nothing more than an aspirate "h";
The problem is sketched completely, like fireworks mounted on poles:
Complexion of evening, the accurate voices of the others.
During Coca Cola lessons it becomes patent
Of noise on the left, and we had so skipped a stage that
The great wave of the past, compounded in derision,
Submerged idea and non-dreamer alike
In falsetto starlight like "purity"
Of design that had been the first danger sign
To wash the sticky, icky stuff down the drain—pfui!

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How does it feel to be outside and inside at the same time,
The delicious feeling of the air contradicting and secretly abetting
The interior warmth? But the land curdles the dismay in which it's
written
Bearing to a final point of folly and doom
The wisdom of these generations.
Look at what you've done to the landscape—
The ice-cube, the olive—
There is a perfect tri-city mesh of things
Extending all the way along the river on both sides
With the end left for thoughts on construction
That are always turning to alps and thresholds
Above the tide of others, feeding a European moss rose without glory.

We shall very soon have the pleasure of recording
A period of unanimous tergiversation in this respect
And to make that pleasure the greater, it is worth while
At the risk of tedious iteration, to put first upon record a final protest:
Rather decaying art, genius, inspiration to hold to
An impossible "calque" of reality, than
"The new school of the trivial, rising up on the field of battle,
Something of sludge and leaf-mold," and life
Goes trickling out through the holes, like water through a sieve,
All in one direction.

You who were directionless, and thought it would solve everything if
you found one,
What do you make of this? Just because a thing is immortal
Is that any reason to worship it? Death, after all, is immortal.
But you have gone into your houses and shut the doors, meaning
There can be no further discussion.
And the river pursues its lonely course
With the sky and the trees cast up from the landscape
For green brings unhappiness—*le vert porte malheur.*
"The chartreuse mountain on the absinthe plain
Makes the strong man's tears tumble down like rain."

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All this came to pass eons ago.
Your program worked out perfectly. You even avoided
The monotony of perfection by leaving in certain flaws:
A backward way of becoming, a forced handshake,
An absent-minded smile, though in fact nothing was left to chance.
Each detail was startlingly clear, as though seen through a magnifying glass,
Or would have been to an ideal observer, namely yourself—
For only you could watch yourself so patiently from afar
The way God watches a sinner on the path to redemption,
Sometimes disappearing into valleys, but always *on the way*,
For it all builds up into something, meaningless or meaningful
As architecture, because planned and then abandoned when completed,
To live afterwards, in sunlight and shadow, a certain amount of years.
Who cares about what was there before? There is no going back,
For standing still means death, and life is moving on,
Moving on towards death. But sometimes standing still is also life.

The Chateau Hardware

It was always November there. The farms
Were a kind of precinct; a certain control
Had been exercised. The little birds
Used to collect along the fence.
It was the great "as though," the how the day went,
The excursions of the police
As I pursued my bodily functions, wanting
Neither fire nor water,
Vibrating to the distant pinch
And turning out the way I am, turning out to greet you.

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John Cage

Diary:

How to Improve the World
(You Will Only Make Matters Worse)
Continued 1966

XXX. THE MOST, THE BEST, WE CAN DO, WE BELIEVE (WANTING TO GIVE EVIDENCE OF LOVE), IS TO GET OUT OF THE WAY, LEAVE SPACE AROUND WHOMEVER OR WHATEVER IT IS. BUT THERE IS NOT SPACE! DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PENNILESSNESS NOW AND PENNILESSNESS THEN: NOW WE'VE GOT UNQUESTIONED CREDIT. "IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD." PUPUL JAYAKAR (STRAIGHT FROM INDIA), TALKING ABOUT COMPUTERS, SAID: AN EXPLOSION OF THE WORD; COMMUNICATION WITHOUT LANGUAGE! (WE'LL STILL SPEAK: A) FOR PRACTICAL REASONS; B) FOR THE PLEASURE OF IT; C) TO SAY WHAT SHOULD/SHOULDN'T BE DONE.) Bird up and overhead. Friends we no longer see. Gone. Some died. XXXI. MEXICO, INDIA,

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CANADA (CHANGING CITIZENSHIP). Electronic democracy (instantaneous voting on the part of anyone): no sheep. World credit. Hearing my thoughts, he asked: Are you a Marxist? Answer: I'm an anarchist, same as you are when you're telephoning, turning on/off the lights, drinking water. PRIVATE PROSPECT OF ENLIGHTENMENT'S NO LONGER SUFFICIENT. NOT JUST SELF- BUT SOCIAL-REALIZATION. Fuller spoke of Semantography, universal picture language devised by C. K. Bliss, said it was rich in nouns while what we need's verbs. *Servant problem.* **What's what? (Russia, U.S.A.) Which is which?** *I mentioned drugs. Kremen said the human mind's interesting enough in the non-toxic state.* XXXII. *Asked about housing utility, Fuller pointed out electrically-lit roadside telephone booths, twenty-four hour use of facilities. (How this came about escaped our notice, no voting or purchase involved. Bed, food, bath to be expected, added to telephone or available elsewhere: decentralization of living.)* UP BY OUR BOOTSTRAPS! LOST IN TWO DIFFERENT WAYS. THERE WAS ALSO A FIRE TO PUT OUT. ALONE (NO ONE TO DISAGREE WITH). Chess. ASKED WHAT HE DID, HE SAID HE'D STUDIED METEOROLOGY, PASSED EXAMINATIONS, GRADUATED, THAT WEATHER'S SIMPLE TO PREDICT. (WHAT HAD HIS TEACHERS HAD IN MIND?) "THERE'S NO REASON FOR THE MISTAKES THAT ARE GENERALLY MADE."

XXXIII. Changes in aquariums: all the fish in the same tank; no Latin

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information. *Cross-Texas, eighty miles per hour, radio rocks and rolls (now I listen): "If it's a game, I won't play it. Don't just stand there. Tell me what's, what's, what's, what's on your mind."* He registered as a conscientious objector. Drafted anyway, he was put on a train going south. He escaped, was caught, spent a year in service. Then, since he never cashed any of the checks they'd given him, he received an honorable discharge. (Russian chickens had diseased muscles. Chemical therapies failed. Suddenly, the chickens were healthy. The muscular tissues'd been reduced to chaos, disorganized by electrical means.)

XXXIV. *Boddhisattva Doctrine: Enter Nirvana only when all beings, sentient, non-sentient, are ready to do likewise.*

Couldn't believe my eyes (stopping for lunch in Red Bud, Illinois): a single photograph of nature (mountains, lake, island, forests) enlarged, printed twice, once left to right, once right to left, the two prints juxtaposed to form a single image, seam down the middle.

Eugenics. Proposal: take facts of art seriously: try them in economics/politics, giving up, that is, notions about balance (of power, of wealth), foreground, background. *They will kill you, she said, with kindness.* There's a temptation to do nothing simply because there's so much to do that one doesn't know where to begin. Begin anywhere. For instance, since electronics is at the heart of the matter, establish a

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global voltage, a single design for plugs and jacks. Remove the need for transformers and adaptors. Vary not the connecting means but the things to be connected. *XXXV. Way's being found to overcome problem inherent in painting and sculpture (fact of object): laser projection of three-dimensional images. To remove object place your hand in thin air behind it.* What's interesting about minds is they work differently. What's interesting about one mind is that it works in different ways. Hunting for one thing, finding another. Gardens that seem uncultivated: Tinguely's at Soissy-sur-Ecole. I remember clams from the Sound exhibited years ago in a Seattle aquarium (near the Farmer's Market, admission ten cents): their movement, their timing of it. They were a bed, immobile, one on top of the other, two feet deep in a tank of water, sand on the bottom of the tank. We were told to wait. XXXVI. *Weather feels good. Isn't. More rain is needed. Water.* He played two games, winning one, losing the other. He was continually himself, totally involved in each game, unmoved by the outcome of either. What's the nature of his teaching? For one thing: devotion (practice gives evidence of it). For another: not just playing half the game but playing all of it (having a view that includes that of the opponent). SUDDENLY A CLAM ROSE TO THE SURFACE DIRECTLY, REMAINED THERE A MOMENT, THEN DESCENDED SLOWLY, LEAF-LIKE, TIPPING ONE WAY, THEN THE

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OTHER, ARRIVING AT THE BOTTOM TO PRODUCE A DISTURBANCE, SUCH THAT CLAM AFTER CLAM DID LIKEWISE, SOMETIMES SEVERAL, SOMETIMES MANY, SOMETIMES NOT ONE AT ALL, PRODUCING A DANCE THAT COMPLETELY INVOLVED US. (DOING ALL THAT WE NEEDED TO DO.) XXXVII. Projects involving many people and many interruptions go well. Private concerns stumble along. THE FACT THEIR PARENTS HAVE SEPARATED DOESN'T DISTURB THE CHILDREN. THEY GO ON LOOKING AT TELEVISION. HOW OLD SHOULD THEY BE BEFORE THEY SMOKE MARIJUANA? NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW. *Tolstoy: art properly arouses religious emotion (conduces to brotherhood, all mankind, no boundaries).* Skinner: "Let us agree to start with, that health is better than illness, wisdom better than ignorance, love better than hate, and productive energy better than neurotic sloth. We invented machines in order to reduce our work. Now that we have them we think we should go on working (Committee of eight on Automation, Economics and Employment considering whether U.S. society should be geared for employment or unemployment voted six to two in favor of employment). XXXVIII. "I BREATHE." *Starvation. There's no stopping.* The garden's a bungalow. The sky's its roof. Hedges form the rectangular rooms. Apple tree, admired, split as though struck by lightning. Coincidence? Branch of it's on the lawn like a picture that's not hanging straight. Flowers are withering. Gardener's on vacation. Mud is on the windshield,

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fallen branches wherever we go. Sky's ready for launching of missiles. "He hit me first." We're open-minded. Result: idea leaving head that had it returns transformed. Individual's thoughts become social projects. "World's O.K. as is": "Work to make the world O.K." Moksha transformed is artha from which it was a liberation. Spirit's materialized. Kama? Walking along, it'll happen we touch one another, falling immediately in love.

XXXIX. IF A UTOPIA SUCH AS SKINNER '48 DESCRIBED (*Walden Two*), DOESN'T EXIST, WHY DOESN'T IT? IF IT DOES, WHY AREN'T WE ALL IN IT? WHAT TRAITOR THINKS MAKES CLEAR WHAT NATION'S MIND'S BECOME. POUND'S REFRAIN: DOWN WITH USURY. LINCOLN: UNLESS NEXT PRESIDENT OUTLAWS PRIVATE BANKING, AMERICA IN HUNDRED YEARS'LL BE IN WORSE SITUATION THAN IT (CIVIL WAR) IS. *Rest of the World's suffered surgery so it won't be India. Indian standing by New Jersey waterfall seeing the surface of the pool below white with the suds of detergents, jammed with beer cans, suggested containers that one could eat. Different flavors. Things that return to nature.* XL. To finance Union vs. Confederacy, Lincoln authorized private banking in the U.S.A. Credit (conventionally 9/10ths of economic power, actual money constituting the remaining tenth) became the property of bankers. The notion is that not everyone'll want his deposit back at the same time. Nine times as much as a banker had was safely to be loaned for interest.

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As the story goes: Dad ran away, came to a ranch, was given a job irrigating (a job that'd kept several men busy every day all day long). He looked the land over, made something, dug something (can't remember which). No further work was necessary. Seeing he had nothing to do, they fired him. XLI. WE'RE GETTING RID OF THE HABIT WE HAD OF EXPLAINING EVERYTHING. *Margaret Mead's idea re metropolitan transportation (Duchamp had same idea in 'twenties): private cars parked at city limits; city cars used as one uses carts in super-markets and airports, abandoned at one's destination. Police busy returning cars to parking lots, getting them serviced or repaired whenever necessary. Basic Economic Security (Robert Theobald:* Free Men and Free Markets*) : everyone'll have what he needs. Wanting things that are scarce, he'll make them, find them, get them (as long as the supply lasts) in return for having done something machines don't do.* The mushrooms appeared sooner even than I expected. XLII. TO KNOW WHETHER OR NOT ART IS CONTEMPORARY, WE NO LONGER USE AESTHETIC CRITERIA (IF IT'S DESTROYED BY SHADOWS, SPOILED BY AMBIENT SOUNDS); (ASSUMING THESE) WE USE SOCIAL CRITERIA: CAN INCLUDE ACTION ON THE PART OF OTHERS. We'll take the mad ones with us, and we know where we're going. Even now, he told me, they sit at the cross-roads in African villages regenerating society. Mental hospitals: localization of a resource we've yet to exploit. *I visited an aging*

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anarchist. (He had the remaining copies of Martin's Men Against the State.*) He introduced me to two Negro children he'd adopted. After they went out to play, he told me what trouble he'd had in deciding finally to draw this line: No jumping up and down on the beds.* XLIII. As he travels from one place to another, he leaves things behind. He needs help but no one knows where he is. Don't know what to read, *Love's Body* or out-of-date newspapers that are lying around. Everything we come across is to the point. *Living underground because there was no money. Arizona land and air permitted making mounds, covering them with cement, excavating to produce rooms, providing these with sky-lights. For anyone approaching, the community was invisible. Cacti, desert plants: the land seemed undisturbed.* Quantity (abundance) changes what's vice, what's virtue. Selfishness is out; carelessness is in. (Waste's characteristic.) "Don't be a litterbug." "Keep North Carolina green." Scratch the Ten Commandments. One of the new ones: Thou Shalt Not Live (in addition to birth control, control of birth, euthanasia). What nature did we now must do. XLIV. Bad politics (Souvtchinsky) produce good art. But of what use is good art? (Johns said he could imagine a world without it and that there was no reason to think it would not be a better one.) He had been trained as a singer. Gave up music for cooking. Started a small restaurant,

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busy three times a day instead of
theatrically once (even then not
everyday). **Julian Beinart said that when,
being chauffered in South Africa, he
noticed Negro hitchhikers, tribesmen who
cover their bodies with a fly-attracting
grease, flies being considered the finest
ornament, he asked the chauffeur to pick
the people up, the chauffeur refused.
Chauffeur said the grease left in the
car would be nearly impossible to
remove: "You'd never get rid of the flies."**

XLV. A MEAL WITHOUT MUSHROOMS IS LIKE A
DAY WITHOUT RAIN. Raised as a
Methodist, I've never taken drugs.
When a physicist told me electrodes near
my ears would remove my sense of
balance or, were I flying through space
and the capsule was revolving, make me
think my balance was normal, I was
fascinated. Asking Duchamp why I accept
electronics, refusing chemistry, he said,
"It's not against the law." **Mead's
discussion of the religious attitude:
first one thinks of himself as one
of a family, later as part of a community,
then as living in a city, citizen of such
and such a country; finally, he feels
no limit to that of which he is a part.**

XLVI. *The past? Fuller's answer:
Keep it. Times Square, for instance: cover
it with a dome; put in tables, chairs,
plastic carpeting. (Keep what remains
so it's there to be enjoyed, not just read
about.) Chinese proceed differently,
Häger reports. Revolting against
themselves, they send tradition-maintaining
artists, actors, musicians off to*

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hard labor in distant places. Clean slate.
After each war, industry offers new products for sale. The benefits from the present conflicts (hot and cold, on earth, in space) will be enormous. No organization, school, for instance, will be able to afford them. The only customer (not just rich but big enough to use them) will be the globe itself. XLVII.
All the garbage cans in West Germany are the same size. They have lids designed so that the only thing one has to do is place them at the back of the garbage truck. The truck does the rest: picks them up, turns them upside-down, opens the lid, receives the garbage, closes the lid, sets them back on the street right-side-up. AFTER GETTING THE INFORMATION FROM A SMALL FRENCH MANUAL, I WAS GLAD TO DISCOVER THAT LACTARIUS PIPERATUS AND L. VELLEREUS, LARGE WHITE MUSHROOMS GROWING PLENTIFULLY WHEREVER I HUNT, ARE INDEED EXCELLENT WHEN GRILLED. RAW, THESE HAVE A MILK THAT BURNS THE TONGUE AND THROAT. COOKED, THEY'RE DELICIOUS. INDIGESTION. **XLVIII. How will one discipline himself? More than he needs of everything'll do it for him.** He told me one of the things he noticed among the people who were using marijuana and LSD was that they didn't bother with the conventions of greeting one another or saying good-by. OPEN AND CLOSED COMMUNITIES (A BOTANICAL EXPRESSION): DISTURBING THE EARTH, MEN HAVE OPENED IT UP. SEEDS AND SPORES IN THE AIR HAVE A CHANCE TO LAND, TO LIVE. LAWS

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WE NEED TO BREAK: LAW FORBIDDING STOPS
ALONG THE HIGHWAYS EXCEPT FOR EMERGENCIES
OR AT DESIGNATED POINTS; LAW PROHIBITING
THE PICKING OF USEFUL PLANTS. XLIX.
Home begins outside. Shelter's inside.
[Buckminster Fuller's *Profile of the*
Industrial Revolution. Technical
acquisition by science of ninety-two atomic
elements accomplished in 1932. Same year
(John McHale comments) gold as a
certificate of wealth was abandoned in
the U.S.A.] Examine the papers, the
books, to see what ideas were had that
could be, but weren't, put to use. Not
only ideas but inventions that worked:
Dad's dehydrator that worked
electrostatically, separating refuse
oil into dry chemicals, water that
could be drunk, oil of the highest grade;
his means for preventing lightning.
PICTUREPHONE: LIMITED COMMERCIAL SERVICE
NOW PROVIDED BETWEEN NEW YORK, CHICAGO AND
WASHINGTON. LIMITATION: CUSTOMERS MUST
BE HIGHLY INVOLVED IN BUSINESS,
GOVERNMENT AND/OR WAR. L. Abundance.
OFFICIALS CHECKED TO MAKE CERTAIN WE'D
PAID THE AIR-TRAVEL TAX, DIDN'T ASK TO SEE
OUR PASSPORTS. Marcel Duchamp.
"*...Valencia, cathedral – University.*
Palma will be interesting again, then
Dardona and off to Milan and after which
the western coast of Yugoslavia & tour
(at southern end) of Grecian Islands
after which plane from Athens to New York.
Many travelers, — going everywhere.
Love, Mom" More irritated by the
schedule than the work, he announced
he'd do all the dishwashing. Shortly the

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others were helping. Sometimes he had
nothing to do. *Returning from*
Europe: "We're all looking forward
to the return of the W.P.A. It's the
only thing we ever had any talent for."
LI. "*Utopia for practical purposes.*"
Tall Jewish teenager just ahead of me,
his mother, wanting to go shopping,
concerned whether he'd be able to file
his passport application without her
help. After several departures, always
coming back, she finally left the crowded
room. Discovering that he'd play chess, I
brought out my portable magnetic set.
Standing in line, we played two games,
leaving the second one unfinished.
The cows in India, not understanding
traffic lights, cross intersections
whenever they reach them. Motorists
never get angry. They wait patiently. The
evening air's heavy with the odor of
burning cow-dung, fuel used for cooking.
Buffalo enterprise: manufacture of
contraceptives for cows. Fewer cows:
more food for the starving millions.
LII. STORY AGAM TOLD: "I'M LOOKING FOR A
KEY I LOST OVER THERE." "WHY NOT LOOK,
THEN, WHERE YOU LOST IT?" "IT'S TOO
DARK OVER THERE. I LOOK FOR IT HERE WHERE
THERE'S LIGHT." Television up-to-date,
things televised aren't. Receiving
set, appliances up-to-date, home
isn't. Architecture: "Environment control
facility", "dwelling advantage" (Fuller),
"each progressive model obsolete...
materials scrapped, reprocessed", ("more
with less") "instituting...world
industry..." "Include...design of...

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services, maintenance, parts inventories
and transportation performances
required to make...service operable around
the world." (John Mc Hale.) "Allowing any
kind of living." Weights, measures.
MUSIC HAVING TOO MANY OR NOT ENOUGH NOTES
IN IT (TAKAHASHI'S PREFERENCE). *LIII.*
The father's a dope addict. The mother
(two days ago — they came in white
coats, white car, using flashlights, asking
"Where's the mad woman?") was taken away
in a straight-jacket. The children sleep
at home, playing and having their meals
next door. (Perpetual motion.) Removing
social controls to points where they
escape our notice. Examine situations.
Make decisions. Implement them. [I
asked Fuller whether he played chess. He
said he used to, but that now he plays
only one (the biggest) game. He does
this energetically, globally ("I have a
strong constitution"), encouraging
youth who've inherited from television,
their "third parent," world
consciousness. "They think 'world'...
Theirs will be the most powerful and
constructive revolution in all history."]
LIV. More we leave the land, the more
productive it becomes. Technic for
changing society: education followed by
unemployment. *Article by Avner Hovne on*
automation (Impact of Science on
Society 15:1, Unesco publication).
Continuity values giving way to flexibility
values. Automation alters what's done and
where we do it. You could always tell
when she was about to go out of her
mind. She would begin to speak the

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truth. April '64: fifty-five global services. September '65: sixty-one global services. No one I speak to knows anything about them. I have no list, don't know what the number, August '66, is. Instead I read what I find in bookstores, libraries, getting clues here and there. World Health. World Food. Listened to Fuller on the 'phone, heard him insist: "World — not international — Man." LV. In connection with space travel, the Russians, they say, have found a means to induce sleep electronically. In twenty or thirty minutes one can get as much rest as eight or nine hours normally provide. Economics (money). Bernard Monnier said: Yes. "It's a question of credit, entirely fictional, conventional." Asked whether it's finally a matter of personalities (not masks but the feelings people give one another), he again said: Yes. "It's a question of one person having confidence in another." *Mobility, immobility. Artists never had enough time to do their work. Their lives always ended before the completion of their projects. Leisure, present or future, is not a social problem. Perhaps the fact we haven't gotten to know one another makes us think that people have nothing to do.* LVI. Urgency. Expression of "losing tempo" in chess. Obligation to retreat, to move a piece one's moved, to proceed in a way having

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nothing to do with one's plan. Take
time, he says. Move, but only after
you're fully aware of all the
possibilities. X-quantities. *Indian*
philosophy and society at loggerheads:
Indian society limited to family;
family's defined as stopping at the
seventh relationship. Another
error, Japanese: the refusal to be formally
introduced (brings about
philanthropies one doesn't want to
practice). The property at Pontpoint.
Formality and informality mixed:
elegance without pretense (an unessential
difference between the front and
kitchen doors). One mistake: only the
servants have TV. At table we
converse. After coffee we play solitaire,
chess, now and then glancing at the
paintings and sculpture ("Everything's been
looked at"). Four P.M. we go
hunting for mushrooms. "Another part of
the forest." LVII. Discussing her
travels, a lady mentioned she'd been
in Mallorca. When she was asked where
that was, she said she had no idea. "We
flew." (Sky's heavily clouded: grey,
even black, some white. There are patches
of blue.) Bureaucracy. *He got the*
notion his ideas belonged to him. He
refused to disclose them, fearing someone
else would profit from them. He made
contracts no one cared to sign. The
view that all's equal (equal rights) is not
different from the view that all's
unequal (unique). No likes or dislikes
implicit in either view.
Non-obstruction. Criticism becomes

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design (one's faculties used before rather than after something's done). Dialogue. LVIII. (Music's made it perfectly clear: we have all the time in the world. What we used timidly to take eight minutes to play we now extend to an hour. People thinking we're not occupied converse with us while we're performing.) Suzuki's lecture on Yu, the principle of not-knowing, a not-knowing never to become a knowing. Towards the end he laughed gently, without expressing any accomplishment, and said, "Isn't it funny? I come all the way from Japan to explain something to you which of its nature is not to be explained?" *Composer, who no longer arranges sounds in a piece, simply facilitates an enterprise. Using a telephone, he locates materials, services, raises money to pay for them.* LIX. MOTHER WROTE TO SAY: "STAY IN EUROPE. SOAK UP AS MUCH BEAUTY AS YOU POSSIBLY CAN." Cards punched for insertion in telephones so we don't have to remember numbers or spend time dialing. Acceleration. What shall we do with our emotions? ("Suffer them," I hear her saying.) Having everything we need, we'll nevertheless spend restless nights awake with desire for pleasures we imagine that never take place. THINGS ALSO HAPPEN GRADUALLY (ONE OF NEW BABYLON'S ANARCHISTS WAS ELECTED A MEMBER OF AMSTERDAM'S CITY COUNCIL). *We've the right, Fuller explains, to object to slavery, segregation, etc. (the problem of work is solved: machines*

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take the place of muscles); we've not yet the right to object to war: first we must design, then implement means for making the world's resources the possession of all men. LX. American anarchist, 1900, admitting failure, retired to the South of France. Dad's airplane engine, 1918, flew to pieces before it left the ground. Alloys needed to contain the power were still undiscovered. Discover dielectrics for ultra-high voltages (global electrical networks). Change society so differences are refreshing, nothing to do with possessions/power. OCTAVIO AND MARIE JOSEPH (WE'LL MEET AGAIN IN MEXICO). NARAYANA MENON HAD SAID, "YOU'LL LIKE THE AMBASSADOR; HE'S A POET." I ASKED PAZ WHETHER BEING A DIPLOMAT TOOK TOO MUCH TIME FROM HIS POETRY. HE SAID IT DIDN'T. "THERE IS NO TRADE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THEY ARE ON THE VERY BEST OF RELATIONS."

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Kenward Elmslie

White Attic

The white attic rests
among dripping trees

with unrolling tunnels
and trembling luggage

around were dens
all kinds of dens

and dazzling fruit
to weary the wind

the sun would end
and we'd smoke among the trees

our wary arms
tenderly relaxed

the urn faces a tree
of unequal height

when it came I grew
moved to two rooms in town

where I reach out at night
and bat the far air

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Japanese City

Centennial of Melville's birth this morning.
Whale balloons drift up released by priests. Whale floats parade
followed by boats of boys in sou'westers jiggled by runners
followed by aldermen in a ritual skiff propelled by "surf" — girls.
In my hotel room with its cellophane partitions (underwatery)
I phone down for ice-water, glass, tumbler, and the cubes.

Cattle for the X-mas Market fill the streets.
Black snouts — a rubby day indeed. Bump the buildings, herds.
A Mexican seamstress brings back my underthings shyly
six, seven times a day. One sweats so, lying about.
She mentions marvelous pistachio green caverns
where one canoes through cool midgy Buddha beards

where drafts of polar air sound like cicadas, where—
About the partitions. The other travelers seem—
there were beautiful hairs in the wash-basin this AM—
thick, and they smelled of limes
(good, that jibes with mine—ugh!—)
but mine, how perverse! Form a hoop, you there. Mine,

mine smell like old apples in a drawer. Jim the Salesman
and his cohorts are massaging my feet—a real treadmill example.
They're in lawn décor, ether machines, and nocturnal learning clasps.
And Jim? Plays cards in his shorts, moves black fish around.
Black houses, the capitol. Hotel chunks. Sky chunks. The squeeze:
green odd numbers—white air, amputations and eagles, respite.
Red even numbers—body sections, the ocean sac, the great beach.
Green even numbers—oval jewels, quicksand, the haven behind
the falls.

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Jim's stammer is contagious, zen smut about hatcheries in the suburbs,
how the women in the canneries came down with the "gills",
hence bathtub love-makings, couplings in the sewers. The ice-water
comes.

The room-clerk's pate shines up through the transparent floor.
Soon the sin couples will start arriving, and the one-way mirror teams
and the government professionals with their portable amulets—
shiny vinyl instruments that probe and stretch.
Much visiting back and forth. Pink blobs. Revels and surveys.
Many olive eyes'll close in a sleep of exhaustion. More ice-water!

The celebrants in metal regalia jangle and tinkle
moving past the red-roofed villas of the Generals,
past the cubicles of the nakeds and into the harbor,
past glum stone busts of the Generals, sitting in the water.
Out they go, (Jim etc.) into the sweet emptied city, leaving behind
the red odd numbers, untouched: pleasure beaches, monsoons and sun.

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Please Don't Take My Sunshine Away

Frank Conroy

I don't remember everything about meeting Maurice... probably we simply faced one another in the middle of the white coral road, hesitating to speak, staring at each other. We were the only boys for miles around. I remember wondering how he could walk on the hot, sharp coral without shoes.

"Don't your feet hurt?"

He shakes his head.

"Do you live around here?"

"Back there. Around the corner."

"Hey that's great. I live in the new house by the woods."

"I saw you working on it," he says.

"We ought to get some wire and a couple of dry-cell batteries and string it up between our houses. We could learn Morse code and send messages."

He looks up from the road. "You think we could?"

"Sure."

"Have you got a bike?"

"Yes." (I had just gotten it.)

"Let's go swimming. I know a rock pit back in the woods. It's got an island in the middle."

"O.K. I'll have to get my bathing suit."

"Hell, you don't need a suit. There's nobody around."

"How far is it?"

"A couple of miles. It's a great place," he says.

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All that summer we were together. My days started with Maurice calling from the road. "Fra-yunk...hey, Fra-yunk..." I'd swallow some milk, grab a piece of bread and rush out, the screen door slamming behind me. There he'd be, straddling his bike, bare feet in the white dust, a brown arm waving, beckoning me out into the blinding glare.

We spent most of our time in the woods. The first project was a tree-house built precariously high in a tall pine. The climb was difficult for anyone who didn't know the secret hand-holds we'd constructed at the hardest parts. Lazing around in the sun we'd tell stories and pick the black pine tar off our hands and feet. Far below us the earth dozed. Occasionally we'd glance back to Chula Vista when a car started, or a man on a roof flashed his hammer. (Down would come the arm in dead silence, then, too late, the sharp snap of the blow.) Above, the fat white clouds drifted in the blue. Great sedate clouds, rich and peaceful. We lay on our backs watching them, getting dizzy as they slipped along behind the branches, as if our tree was falling.

On the ground we built track and field games. Hour after hour our bodies fell like bundles into the softened sand. Maurice once high-jumped his own height. We kept a record in a nickel notebook, carefully noting down our performance and progress.

We had caches of canned food and comic books at different places in the woods. We rarely used them, it was the idea that pleased us.

Best of all was the rock quarry. Down the long white coral road on our bikes, mile after mile into the deserted woods. Leaving the bikes against a tree we walked across the sand. The air buzzed with sun and sleepy insects. If we saw a king snake, all six feet wrapped black and shiny in the shade of a palmetto, we'd break off a pine branch and kill it, smashing the small head till the blood ran. Rabbits were rare, if we saw one we'd throw a stick.

Once we found a dead mule, bones picked almost clean, ants streaming through the eyes. The stench was too much for us and after poking the corpse we ran away, gasping for

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breath. We talked about that mule for weeks. What was its fascination? Death dramatized, something of unbelievable importance being revealed right in front of us. But something else too. We rambled over a tremendous amount of space every day, over vast areas of silent, empty woods (a pine woods on sandy ground is more like a desert than anything else), rambled over miles of wasteland trying to find the center of it, the heart, the place to be to *know* it. We sensed the forces around us but they were too thinly spread, too finely drawn over all the miles of woods for us to grasp them. The forces eluded us. We would run into a clearing knowing that just a moment ago, in that instant before we had arrived, something of importance had happened there. But when we found the dead mule we knew we were close, suddenly very close. Those forces spread like air over the woods had converged here, on this animal the moment he died, and were not yet altogether gone.

We could see the abandoned quarry behind the trees, the tall white island in the center seeming to move as we ran. Two black hawks lifted from the pinnacle, swerving away over the water and up into the blue air, their wings beating slowly, synchronized in movement like some double image in a dream. Impossibly still, the water lay against the shining coral shore like brown glass. We ran to the edge, shouting to break the silence.

"Yodela-ay! Yodelay-io!"

"Ali-ali-ali-ali-ali-*in*-free!"

Or just "Yay!"

(We did a lot of shouting...phrases from childhood games, dirty words, satisfying noises of all kinds. We were afraid, but only a little afraid, of the silence around us. Usually there was enough breeze in the tops of the pines to make a faint rustling noise behind the day, but I remember times, hot, airless days, sitting in the woods alone in perfect silence, paralysis creeping over my limbs, my ears deaf without sound to hear, my eyes frozen without movement to watch. We shouted in joy and fear, sending our voices ahead to animate the bleakness, supremely conscious of ourselves as pinpoints of life in a world

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of dead things, impurities that sand, coral, water and dead mules were only tolerating.)

It was easy to undress. We wore only bluejeans. I remember a mild shock at the absence of anything but air against my skin. Running to the edge of the bank we threw ourselves into the water, instantly setting the whole broad surface alive with movement and dappled light. Our legs kicked up thin sheets of water that sparkled in the sun and the slapping of our cupped hands echoed away into the woods. The water was always warm.

Neither one of us knew how to swim properly. We'd simply crash through, with a tremendous amount of wasted movement, towards the island, our progress slow but steady. We never raced, knowing, I suppose, that as bad as we were it was pointless. Halfway across we'd tread water.

"It's great nobody ever comes here," I'd say, spluttering.

"I bet nobody even knows about it except us."

"If any kids from Dania find it we can put up signs saying the water is poisoned."

"Hey, maybe it is!"

We'd laugh.

"You know that big old turtle we saw on the bank?"

"Yes?"

"I bet he could take your peter off in one bite."

"Jesus Christ!" I'd yell, only half joking, my legs propelling me up in the air. "Jesus Christ!"

At the highest point of the man-made island a bed of soft green moss had grown over the coral. We'd lie with our chins in our hands looking out over the miles of pine woods, the sun hot against our backsides.

"We ought to build a shack out here."

"Have to carry all the wood."

"We could build a raft and float the stuff over."

"Hmm..."

Often we'd fall asleep, tired from the long ride and the swim...a drowsy, dreamless half-sleep in the sun. When one awoke the colors of the world had deepened, as if the whole scene had just been created.

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Riding back we'd keep an eye out for cars parked in the woods. Two or three times we'd spotted one, and hidden in the tops of nearby trees had watched the gentle rocking motion of the chassis on its greased springs, silent and comically sinister. We were too scared to get close enough to see anything, except a heart-freezing glimpse of a woman's arm being raised, or the sudden flash of sunlight on a bald pate. We knew what we were watching, but somehow we could never quite believe it. From the safety of the trees we'd whistle and screech till the car drove away. Scrambling down we'd race over to find the prophylactic, holding it up on the end of a long stick, grimacing with disgust. Neither of us knew exactly what it was, accepting it nevertheless as proof that the unbelievable act had taken place. We hid our ignorance from each other, making oblique wisecracks to cover it up.

Running down the wide empty avenue between the barracks. Deserted buildings fall behind as our toes drive into the hot sand, hundreds of dark buildings in long rows folding majestically on the periphery of vision, sealing off escape.

"Yippee!"

"Fuck the armee!"

Rushing through the hot air, ripping it apart with speed, wind cramming our open mouths and ears, racing neck and neck, stride for stride in wild harmonious abandon. At the sweetest moment our legs give out, suddenly trembling, and we fall sliding into the sand, tumbling unnecessarily for the sheer fun of it, rolling like dogs in the crystalline cloud.

I spit the dead grains from my mouth and shake my head. Looking up I see the twin lines of our footprints stretching back into a white glare. Hunched over in rapt absorption, Maurice picks at the calloused soles of his feet.

Pushing hard. The door swings easily and bangs against the inside wall. An enormous room, empty, the sun streaming in long bars across the wooden floor. My eyes search the corners, expecting something, but the place is bare. "Fuck the army!" My voice resounds marvelously. "Up your mother's *ass*-

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hole!" I stand as if waiting for an answer. The silence is oppressive and I run to the next building.

A fire extinguisher lies on the floor. I pick it up to throw across the room, but it's too heavy and all I can do is let it fall a few feet away.

"Hey Fraaaank!" Maurice calls from another building. I run outside and stand in the center of the avenue. I can't tell which building his voice is coming from. "Frank!" He calls again, waving from a doorway. "Over here."

"Find something?"

"Over here."

He takes me into a building that seems darker than the others. Some of the windows are broken and boarded up.

"Look at this."

A carving on the wall, lines chipped out with a knife, very elaborate and skilful.

"Wow!" I reach out and touch it. The scene is of a woman, lying with her thighs spread apart and an immense disembodied phallus halfway inside her. She gazes over her breasts and belly at the viewer, eyes popping in a caricature of lust, tongue hanging. The detail is painstaking, down to the fine lines of pubic hair.

"Holy Mackerel," says Maurice. "You think we can get it off the wall?"

"We'll need tools. We can do it tomorrow."

"Wouldn't it be great in the tree house."

"We can get it off there," I say, taking my hand away.

"It'll be safe in the tree house."

"We can't show it to anybody. Not even Jean." (His brother.)

"Hell, I wouldn't show it to him. He'd just take it. It's ours."

We step back to let the light fall cleanly against the wall.

"Wow."

"Holy Mackerel."

Maurice gives a long, low whistle like some sharpy in the movies and we crack up simultaneously, moving around the room, bent over, laughing and slapping ourselves.

Down the avenue in an easy trot towards the largest build-

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ing. The sun is gone. Immense clouds from the ocean move swiftly overhead, their tops white and voluptuous, their undersides black with rain. (Florida weather is sudden and dramatic. I once saw a high cloud rain into a lower one, with no effect below.) The air smells peculiar, and in the filtered light, colors fade. Distant thunder as we run into the building.

An old gym. The hardwood floor had been taken up but the basketball backboards remain, a few strands of webbing hanging limply from the hoops. Our voices echo off the high roof.

"Find anything?"

"No. It's been cleaned out."

In a corner stands an old upright piano. The keys go down under my fingers but there is no sound. I open the top, and standing on a broken-backed chair, peer down into the strings. The hammers are there, like a line of soldiers, and the strings are rusty but taut. Carefully I lower my arm into the piano, get my finger behind one of the hammers and give it a gentle flip. A note sounds weakly.

"It works," I yell to Maurice. He is shimmying up the basketball pole.

Examining the front of the piano I find a small lever set into the wood. A corroded metal plate is readable after I rub it with spit. It says "Practise-Play." I push the lever slowly to the Play position and then strike a chord. The room fills with sound.

"LEP-rosy (va-room), eee gods I've got Lep-rosy (va-room), there goes my eye-ball (plink), into your high-ball (plink-plink)...

Bump-a-dada, bump-a-dada, bump-a-dada, just the way you look to-night.

Jada... Jada... jada jada jing jing jing."

Maurice sits on the basketball hoop high in the air. He stretches out his arms to show he isn't holding on. At just that moment an explosion rocks the earth. My chair trembles and the windows rattle in their frames. We wait breathlessly, Maurice with his arms still outstretched, myself motionless at the piano. A wall of water is falling from the sky, growing heavier with every instant of silence, gathering speed to drive

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deep in the sand. A drop on the drumlike roof. Another. And then, with a roar, the full load crashes down, shaking the building.

Maurice lowers his tail through the basketball hoop like a man sitting in a garbage pail. He hangs there for a second, then pulls himself up and drops silently to the floor. He yells something I can't hear.

"What?"

His lips move as he shouts. He wants to go out in the rain. I nod. He knows I'd rather stay with the piano so he doesn't wait, turning and running to the door which he throws open. Standing there, his body is a dark silhouette against the white lines of rain. He moves through the doorway and the white lines fall behind him like a curtain.

At the window I watch him running down the avenue, his jeans already black and soaking, his bony shoulders shining with epaulets of spray. He trots, slows down, staggers, his arms straight up as if the rain was a rope he could climb. Turning slowly, head lifted and mouth open to catch the drops, his back bends like a smooth, stringless bow.

"But *dar*ling," he almost yelled at her, "don't you see what I mean?"

Mother and Guy were having an argument about Carlton Fredericks, the soap-opera nutritionist, and it was clear that if I waited around for supper I'd miss my ride to the fair. I slipped out of the house on tiptoes, carefully closing the screen door behind me, wincing as the spring creaked.

It was good to be out. It was always good. Their voices faded away as I walked up the moonlit road towards Maurice's. Every now and then a dog barked... close by, from across the road, from the fringes of the woods. Yard dogs, talking over great distances like telegraphers at sea, waiting, cocking their heads to listen to the silence, haunches trembling for the answering yip or the long, atavistic howl. Steel guitars came from a kitchen radio, slippery tremolos drifting out across the warm air like slow birds. I counted my change in the moonlight. Seventy-three cents.

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As Maurice's house came into view I broke into a run. In a yellow window I could see his mother washing up after dinner, her body rocking gently back and forth as she shifted her immense weight from one leg to the other. Popeye, the old dog, jogged halfway across the yard to investigate me. Popeye was totally blind so you had to tell him who you were.

"It's me 'peye. Just me."

Maurice's father was sitting in front of the house, reclining in a tattered deck chair we'd found at the dump. He was drinking from a wine bottle, holding it up in the bright moon after each slug to see how much was left. "Evening boy."

"Evening sir." I stood before him for a moment, waiting for him to speak. It was a tradition and he got annoyed if you didn't honor it. Having seen him mean drunk on more than one occasion, I always did. (The quietest thirteen-year-old boy in the world is the boy who finds a raving, half-blind, red-necked, out-of-work hillbilly house-painter between himself and the door.)

"You coming with us to the fair?"

"Yes sir. If I can."

He took a drink and smiled, his mouth stained with wine. "Course you can. Course you can," he said. "You're a good boy."

"Is that Maurice taking a shower?" Someone was in the stall by the outhouse.

"That's Jean."

We heard the rattle of a pail and than a splashing sound. "Shee-ut! It's cold."

"Jean!" The old man's voice rose suddenly, like a load of coal dumped in a chute. "Hush up your mouth!"

"Well it's *cold*, pa."

Not bothering to answer he slumped down in the deck chair. "Go on, boy," he said to me. "Maurice is inside."

At just that moment the screen door opened and Mrs. Rushing threw out a basin of water. It flashed through the air and struck the ground where the light spilled from the window. A thousand gleaming flies lifted from the greasy sand

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the instant the water hit, and fell back the instant afterward, like a green blanket.

"Well look who's here," she said, smiling. "Ready to go to the fair?"

"Yes ma'm." I followed her into the house, my head down, watching her elephant legs. I smelled a cake in the kerosene oven.

"You boys go in back now so you won't be underfoot," she said, wiping the oilcloth table. "I've got to get ready."

"Is the cake for tonight?" I whispered as we pushed through the curtain.

"I think so," Maurice said.

We sat on Maurice's bed and played cards in the flickering light. The house was one room, divided by a dark curtain about six feet high strung up on a length of wire stretched from wall to wall. The kitchen, dining table and chairs were on one side, and the beds on the other. There were four beds, taking up almost every inch of space. One had to turn sideways to walk between them. Maurice, his older brothers Jean and Dan, and of course Mr. and Mrs. Rushing all slept there. Their clothes and personal belongings were neatly crammed into open shelves high on the walls. The family shotgun hung on two nails over the only window.

"Gin."

"Oh shucks. I was almost there."

"All right now, come out here while I get dressed." Mrs. Rushing pulled the curtain back and waited. "Just one piece each," she said. "No snitching when I ain't looking."

"Ahh," Maurice sighed. "Coconut."

On the round table were two plates with cake, and resting on the stove the mother lode, fresh icing rippling down its sides.

"Ma, you didn't wash the bowl?"

She laughed from the other side of the curtain. "No, honey. It's there on top of the ice-box."

Jean pushed through the door, dressed in jeans and a freshly laundered shirt. The cuffs were folded back twice to show his muscular forearms. His wet hair was slicked back over his head,

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revealing a pale white band at the top of his brow.

"The bowl's ours!" Maurice said.

"Hell, you're welcome to it." He sat down by the old radio (tall, with carved wood, like a miniature cathedral) and fiddled with the dial till he got some music. Then, suddenly impatient, he turned it off and went to the door. "Pa, when are we going! It's getting late."

The old man didn't answer. Maurice and I ate our cake and listened to Mrs. Rushing moving softly on the other side of the curtain.

She stood at the side of the road, her plastic purse hanging from folded hands. A small straw hat was placed straight on her head, pinned to her hair with two long needles like antennae. She wore a print dress she'd made from twenty-pound flour sacks.

The old man, Jean, Dan and myself stood behind the old De Soto, leaning up against it like the victims of a police frisk. "Be sure it's in second," Mr. Rushing yelled over the rear fender.

"I know what to do, pa," Maurice answered from inside.

"And don't turn the ignition on until we get up some speed!"

"I know, I know," he said.

"And don't talk back to your pa!"

Dan, the eldest brother, a big gentle man who always spoke softly, turned to me. "There ain't too much room back here, Frankie. See if you can get a purchase up there on the doorpost."

I ran to my position. Through the window Maurice looked absurdly small behind the wheel. He had to crane his neck to see over the hood. His white teeth gleamed in the moonlight as he smiled.

"All right now... HEAVE!"

The car began to roll immediately, coral crunching under the tires as it picked up speed. Soon I found myself running just to keep up. After twenty or thirty yards the old man yelled, "Now!"

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Maurice snapped out the clutch and the car pushed back at me, almost knocking me over. The engine coughed, died, coughed, and caught. I heard him cry "Yippee" as he pulled away in a sudden burst of power, rear tires spinning and engine roaring. In a split second he was far up the road, without lights, shifting into third.

Breathing heavily, I came to a halt. Ten yards behind me the three men stood in the middle of the road, bent over, half-bent, their arms hanging at their sides. And behind them, way back in the distance where we'd started, Mrs. Rushing took a step forward to look after us.

"Where in hell does he think he's going?" The old man asked, but he wasn't mad.

We could barely fit in the car. The springs sank alarmingly as Mrs. Rushing eased herself into the front seat, making the old De Soto look as if it were headed for the center of the earth, but things straightened out as Jean and Dan got in back. Maurice sat on my lap and we were off.

Down Dania Boulevard, the De Soto creaking like a hay wagon, I could see the rusted-out front fender waving in the wind. Every now and then a big Buick or Caddy would rush up behind us, lights flashing, and whip by as if we were standing still. Big, thick-necked men, holding their broads, speeding down to Miami and the dog track and the Fronton. An Olds fish-tailed past at ninety-five and we saw a blond head dip down. Jean opened a bottle of wine. "You just know she's blowing him," he said softly to Dan.

Maurice and I watched the taillights disappear in the distance.

"Let me have some," Maurice whispered, making a grab for the bottle.

Jean held it back. "Well, looky here!" he said in mock surprise.

"Just one. I won't take much."

"What'll you give me?"

"Aw Jean, come on."

Maurice took the bottle and raised it to his lips. I watched his Adam's apple moving like a piston, once, twice, three times.

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Jean reached for the bottle but at just that moment Mrs. Rushing turned around and froze everybody. Quick as a flash she reached back and snatched the bottle, glaring at Jean. "You giving wine to those children?"

There was no escape for Jean, caught between Dan on one side and Maurice and me on the other. He just looked down at his shoes. Mrs. Rushing raised her tree-trunk arm to the roof of the car. Her five fingers were spread like a star. A faint grunt escaped her lips as she drove the whole weighty load straight down on top of Jean's unsuspecting head. A tremendous blow, traveling down his backbone and compressing the entire back seat with stunning force.

It took a moment for Jean to reorient himself. "Aw, maw," he said.

Mrs. Rushing rolled down her window and threw out the wine bottle.

"Aw, maw!" he said again, slightly bewildered at the speed with which events had transpired. "It was almost full."

Mrs. Rushing didn't answer. She raised her head to watch the road and never looked back. Dan laughed quietly, without a trace of malice.

A perpendicular column of blue light descended from the sky to the parking field, striking the earth behind a screen of silhouetted automobiles, spreading a pool of white radiance, a vague open-topped dome of light in the air above us. Insects drifted through like snowflakes, disappearing at the perimeter.

"Now make sure you know where the car is," Mrs. Rushing said. "We'll meet here at midnight." She saw Jean rushing off. "Jean! Did you mind me?" He was gone before she could stop him. "That boy," she said sadly.

The old man took out his change purse. "How much money have you got?"

"Sixty cents," Maurice answered.

"Frankie?"

"Seventy-three cents, sir."

He counted some change and held it out to us. "That makes

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a dollar and a half each. And don't spend it all in one place."

"Thank you!" we yelled together.

Dan gave us each a quarter, and just before we took off, Maurice's mother held out two silver coins. "That's eating money," she said. "And you ain't getting any more so don't spend it on those bumper cars like last time."

"We won't, momma. Thanks."

"Thank you m'am."

"All right boys. Have a good time and stay out of trouble. We'll see you later." She moved off on her husband's arm, smiling, one hand unnecessarily holding down her hat (as if he were sweeping her away in a waltz or a polka, as if only now, at the last moment, could she control her appearance before giving up to the madcap whirl of the evening), her buttocks rolling like ships at sea.

On the fairway Maurice and I darted through the crowd like needles through a tapestry, turning, pausing, deftly insinuating ourselves across the slow movement of the parade.

The bumper cars! Waiting in line we draped ourselves over the wooden railing and surveyed the scene. On the steel floor small cars raced into the distance, took a curve, and raced back, each with a long pole to the shiny roof trailing sparks of power. Most of the drivers were children, but here and there an adult could be seen, or a young couple crammed in together, giggling, trying to avoid collisions. WHOMP! We laughed as a kid in overalls caught a teen-aged girl broadside and spun away before she could retaliate. WHOMP! Someone else hit her. This time she straightened out and gave it some speed, accelerating nicely.

"That one looks good," I said. "Number ten. I hope she gets out." (There were small but critical differences in the power of the cars. It was important to get the faster ones.)

"Thirty-eight," Maurice said. "And that blue one, ninety-nine."

When the boy came around we each bought a ribbon of tickets. The air was full of ozone, a thin, sharp white smell in the back of one's nose. A whistle blew and the power was cut. All over the floor cars rolled to a stop.

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"She's getting out," I yelled, as the crowd pushed up behind us. "Number ten! I've got number ten."

"Ninety-nine! In the back."

As the floor cleared the boy swung open the barrier and stepped to the side. With a tremendous roar fifty kids rushed out onto the steel track, fanning out from the narrow gate in all directions like water from a split hose. Someone was at my side, racing me to number ten, but at the last moment (when he was slowing down) I leapt into the air and landed with both feet in the cockpit, my hands grabbing the pole for support. Laughing, I slithered down into position and watched him run off for another car.

The controls were simple. An accelerator and a steering wheel. I spun the wheel, testing the amount of play. It was fairly tight. Waiting, I tried to find Maurice, but the view was obscured.

At last every kid had a car. The barrier was closed and a whistle sounded. I pressed the accelerator to the floor as somewhere out of sight the power was turned on. My car began to move. Dozens of cars moved at top speed around the track, dodging in and out as the drivers attempted to get the feel of their vehicles. I bent back my head, sighting up the pole to watch the metal tongue sliding across the roof, sucking power.

Confident, after a few experiments, that my car was one of the best on the floor, I took off to look for Maurice, sideswiping a few kids along the way just for the hell of it. "One Way Only!" said a sign on the wall. "No Head-on Collisions!" Maurice was waiting for me at the edge of the curve. He'd got the car he wanted, the blue one. I pulled up beside him.

"O.K.?"

"O.K.!"

"Who do we get?"

"Watch it!" Maurice was struck by a giggling girl who made no attempt to control her vehicle. She'd been pushed into Maurice by a fat boy in a Tom Mix tee-shirt. "Him!" Maurice yelled. "Tom Mix!"

Our strategy had been worked out the previous year. The

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only question was who went first. Maurice took off, and after skirting the helpless girl, I counted to ten under my breath and followed. Elbows out, back curved over the wheel, Maurice pursued the fat boy, slowly closing the gap. We went an entire lap before Tom Mix made his move. He went to the outside, figuring to cut across and catch the giggling girl from behind. Maurice anticipated this and raced down the rail, turning at the last moment to cross paths with plenty of speed. At exactly the same time I aimed for the spot where it seemed to me Tom Mix would end up, collecting maximum speed on the long straight run.

It worked perfectly. Maurice closed in, his head bent down. At the last instant Tom Mix saw him coming and tried to turn away, but it was too late. FA-BOOM! Maurice caught him solidly on the left fender, spinning the car a quarter turn, reversing his wheels and bringing him to a halt. Tom Mix spun the steering wheel frantically, trying to straighten himself out and get started again. He'd been prepared for Maurice, but as I barreled in, teeth clenched, straight-armed, I could see he didn't expect me. His body was loose. Innocent. FA-BAM! A marvelous, straight-on hit, jolting him in his seat, shaking his fat like jello.

We were invincible! Gasping, choking with laughter too wild and sweet to come out, our brains bursting with excitement, we drove off to new conquests.

It was getting late. The crowds had thinned out, and along the fairway most of the stalls were closing down for the night. Maurice and I sat on the guard rail of a darkened carousel eating hot dogs, waving away the flies automatically.

"How much have you got left?"

"Thirty-five cents," I said.

"I've got a quarter."

"I guess it's almost midnight."

Maurice jumped down from the fence and ran to ask someone what time it was. Tired, I walked after him.

"Ten of," he said when I reached him.

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"Well, let's mosey on down."

We ambled along the littered promenade in the general direction of the parking field, checking the sandy ground for dropped coins. Maurice bent over and picked up a small felt pennant on a stick. DANIA- FLA. on a background of orange blossoms. "For the tree-house."

We stopped in front of a freak show to look at the posters. The alligator man. The duck woman. The armless wonder. Special attraction! The man without a face.

"I saw it last year," Maurice said. "It's a fake."

"They say he's got alligator skin."

"He's painted up. He lies around in a pit full of sawdust with these big hunks of raw meat. But he doesn't touch the meat or anything. It's a fake."

"You mean he's just like us only painted up?"

"Well, no," Maurice said, pausing. "He don't have no arms. His hands sort of grow out of his shoulders."

"What?"

"Like little baby hands. But they're dead. He can't move them."

"Didn't it make you feel funny to look at him?"

"I didn't like it. He just lay there in the sawdust, real still, as if he was dead, with his head turned away. And we all walked by. If he'd really been an alligator man, well then O.K., but it was a fake and I didn't want to look." He turned away from the poster. "Let's go."

At the edge of the fair a small booth is still open, its lights shining out into the empty air. A big man in a purple jacket sits on a stool behind the counter drinking a container of coffee. As we approach he pauses momentarily, looks at us over the rim of the container, and then continues drinking as if he hadn't seen us.

We stop twenty feet away to examine the game. It's a ring toss. Ten cents a throw and the prizes are on the walls. Pennants, funny hats, candy boxes, two live canaries, china dolls, stuffed animals, canned hams, ukuleles, toasters, radios, sil-

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verware. Maurice nudges me. "Look there, on the back wall." I whistle softly. Mounted on a wooden plaque, with a belt and holster hanging next to it, is the grand prize, a silver revolver.

"Wow," Maurice whispers as we move forward.

"It's beautiful. Look at the carving on the handle."

"With a holster and everything."

The big man hasn't looked at us, or moved a muscle.

"How do you win the gun?" Maurice asks.

"Two out of three tosses on the red peg," he says expressionlessly.

We look at the back wall. Recessed into a lighted chamber under the pistol is a red peg, angled backwards under a sloping roof. I give Maurice a nickel. "We can both try."

"O.K. Give me three, please."

It's as if the man is blind. He stares fixedly out into the darkness. Bright lights shine behind his head. He leans forward slightly, collects the change with one hand and brings up three rings from under the counter with the other, all in one smooth movement, without looking down or changing position on the stool.

Maurice takes aim and throws a ring. It strikes the wall and falls onto a shelf below. "Too high," he says, and throws again. The second ring is too low. "Shucks," Maurice says. "Well, for one I get a radio." He throws the last ring. It strikes the recessed enclosure straight on, but doesn't fit and falls away. "Did you see that?" he asks me.

"It won't go that way. You have to lob it in at an angle so it'll fit."

"I'm going to ask momma for another thirty cents. I'll be right back." He runs off into the darkness.

I stand for a moment, studying the red peg. My heart beats quickly because of the discovery of throwing at an angle. It'll still be difficult, the ring must enter the enclosure at exactly the right tilt. Once inside, it must fall on the peg by its own weight. I remind myself to throw softly so it won't bounce off the back wall.

"I'll take three."

Once again he leans forward in the smooth gesture, slap-

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ping the rings on the counter near my hands. Behind me, far away, I can hear cars starting up in the parking field.

The edge of the counter presses against my stomach. I toss the first ring, giving a faint flick of the wrist at the last instant to keep it from turning over in the air. It sails into the enclosure as if guided by an invisible hand. I can hardly believe my eyes. It falls slowly towards the peg, strikes, and leans. I duck down my head and shield my eyes from the bright lights. Yes! It covers the top of the peg! Another good toss could knock it over.

Three feet away the man sits absolutely still. I can hear his breathing. He hasn't looked up, or back at the red peg. It's as if I'm not there.

Picking up the second ring I know I'm going to win. Nothing can stop it, as if it's already happened, as if time were running backwards. A peculiar, giddy feeling comes over me. A lightheadedness, strangely familiar. I throw the second ring. It misses and falls away. I shrug, blinking, as if something annoying had happened around me, some minor irritation interrupting my concentration. I feel like asking for the ring back even though I know it makes no difference. The third ring is in my hands. I lean forward, aim and throw. It goes into the enclosure, as I had known it would, falls onto the peg, and knocks the other down underneath it. I've won. Two rings over the red peg. I look at them for a moment. An immense calm lies over my soul. Then I look up at the revolver.

"I've won."

The man doesn't move.

"I've won. Look."

He turns around and looks back at the peg. Then he gets off the stool and walks back and takes the rings off the peg and drops them with the others on the shelf. He comes back and stands in front of me, gazing out over my head. "You missed."

"What?"

He says nothing.

For a moment I don't know what to do. I stand there looking up at him. His face is white and hard.

"But I won," I say.

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Slowly he lowers his head and looks at me. His eyes are dark under thick black eyebrows. He lifts his arm from behind the counter and extends it to me. As if in a dream I reach out to shake hands.

Gently but firmly he takes my wrist, bends and spreads his knees a fraction of an inch, and slowly rubs my palm under his balls.

The arc-light had been turned off, and without a landmark it took me some time to find the car. I wandered around the field for five or ten minutes, not really looking, trying to calm down. Eventually I came on the De Soto. Pausing behind a pick-up truck I wiped my eyes carefully on the sleeve of my shirt and took a couple of deep breaths.

"Hey." Maurice was sitting on the running board, his chin in his hands.

"Hey." My voice sounded strange.

"Dan says Jean went off somewhere. With some girl. Pa wants to go without him but momma says we should wait."

I opened the back door and climbed into the car. Dan was asleep. I sat in the corner and pressed myself against the wall, my eyes closed.

"I don't give a hot damn," the old man said. "I ain't gonna wait no longer. He's gone, woman."

"Well, five minutes more."

"God-damn women fussing over every little thing."

We waited ten minutes, and when Jean still hadn't appeared the old man started the engine. "Come on, boy," he said to Maurice. "He ain't coming back."

Maurice got in beside me. I kept my eyes closed, pretending I was asleep. Lights flashed across my eyelids as we reached the main road.

Halfway home I opened my eyes to see where we were. Maurice saw me looking out the window. After a minute or two he asked, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," I said, and settled down as if to go back to sleep.

Chula Vista was dark, but the lights were still on at my house. Mr. Rushing stopped at the corner and let me out.

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"See you tomorrow," Maurice said.

"O.K." I waved and started for the house. The moon had set and all the stars were out, thousands of them spread over the black sky like lacework. It was a quiet, windless night.

Their voices carried on the still air. I heard them, arguing away in the same tones as when I'd left, Guy's slightly hoarse rising sentences, mother's rich contralto falling sentences, back and forth, back and forth, like animals pacing their cages.

I pushed open the screen door and started for my bed.

"Frank? Is that you?" my mother called from the other side of the curtain.

"Yes."

"Wash the dishes before you go to bed."

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James Schuyler

Going

In the month when the Kamchatka bugbane
finally turns its strung-out hard pellets white
and a sudden drench flattens the fugitive
meadow saffron to tissue-paper scraps
and winds follow that bend and crack without breaking
the woody stems of chrysanthemums so the good of not
disbudding
shows in lower smaller flights of metallic pungency,
a clear zenith looks lightly dusted and fades to nothing
at the skyline, shadows float up to the lighted surfaces
as though they and only they kept on the leaves
that hide their color in a glassy shine.
A garnering squirrel makes a frantic chatter at a posse of cats
that sit and stare while their coats thicken. Days
are shorter, more limpid, are like a kiss
neither dry nor wet nor on the lips
that sends a light shock in rings
through all the surface of the skin. Early, in the middle
of the afternoon, the light slants
into rooms that face south-west: into this room
across a bookcase so the dead-brown gold-stamped
spines look to be those to take down now:
Hodge and His Masters, The Cereals in America.
If a sheet, if a leaf of gold could be beaten to transparency,
and all that here roots and extrudes were tarnished silver
and blackened bronze—here and there
brushed and bumped against into highlights—
were seen through it by the wind-flickered quick-setting sun,
October would look no different than it looks.

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Buried at Springs

There is a hornet in the room
and one of us will have to go
out the window into the late
August mid-afternoon sun. I
won. There is a certain challenge
in being humane to hornets
but not much. A launch draws
two lines of wake behind it
on the bay like a delta
with a melted base. Sandy
billows, or so they look,
of feathery ripe heads of grass,
an acid-yellow kind of
goldenrod glowing or glowering
in shade. Rocks with rags
of shadow, washed dust clouts
that will never bleach.
It is not like this at all.
The rapid running of the
lapping water, a hollow knock
of someone shipping oars,
it's eleven years since
Frank sat at this desk and
saw and heard it all:
the incessant water the
immutable crickets only
not the same: new needles
on the spruce, new seaweed
on the lowtide rocks,
other grass and other water
even the great gold lichen
on a granite boulder
even the boulder quite
literally is not the same

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II

A day, subtle and suppressed
in mounds of juniper enfolding
scratchy pockets of shadow
while bigness—rocks, trees, a stump—
stand shadowless in an overcast
of ripe grass. There is nothing
but shadiness, like the boggy depths
of a stand of spruce, its resonance
just the thin scream
of mosquitoes ascending.
Boats are light lumps on the bay
stretching past erased islands
to ocean and the terrible tumble,
and London ("rain persisting")
and Paris ("changing to rain").
Delicate day, setting the bright
of a young spruce against the cold
of an old one hung with unripe cones
each exuding at its tip
gum, pungent, clear as a tear,
a day stained and fractured
as the quartz in ribbons in the rocks
of a dulled and distant point,
a day like a gull passing
slowly flapping its wings
in a kind of lope, a day without
breeze enough to shake loose
the last fireweed flowers,
a faintly clammy day, like wet silk,
stained by one dead branch
the harsh russet of dried blood.

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Edward Kissam

Accident

The room is too small; viscous Diana
stands with her hair in lamp, tassels

shade her in halos like comicbook
lightning. She's painted hot bulb pumpkin.

Told you so, says Bob—invisible thin
Jim's in the middle. It's dark since

Cinderella's vanity can't find even candles—
there's a roach gnawing at my yellow heel.

Fire-fighting plans for the dead flare up
in stereo—there's more than three voices

in the room, there's several uncandled
persons of good worth and seesaw habits.

Diana slings cherry pop to Helen while fuzz
collect downtown in drainpipes, the rodeo gates.

Today's a short one—lighting up time's four.
We're not late in the dark and care.

There's tea in cups and moon closes aurora
borealis down—the soft north mare neighs.

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Les Halles

Photographs by Harold Chapman

Les Halles Centrales de Paris—the Central Market of Paris—is in 1967 enjoying only an apparent reprieve. In decreeing its removal, the public powers have long since signed its death sentence. But this eight-hundred-year-old mastodon, despite its advanced age, retains a strange vitality, and does not seem so easy to move around. Its transfer to Rungis, originally anticipated for 1966, has raised many and difficult problems, not all of which have been solved. So it is still with us, at the heart of Parisian life.

Some of these problems and the motivation behind them are not, in essence, absolutely new. The lack of balance created by a central market constantly forced to expand to meet the needs of an urban population has always been one of the preoccupations of Parisian officials and of the government. Legend has it that one day in the summer of 1810 Napoleon I pensively contemplated the spectacle of the reconstruction of the *Halle au Blé*, destroyed by fire several years before. At his feet lay "a confusion of hybrid structures, crowded together every which way, shapeless masses of straggling houses, pillared galleries, and ill-planned shelters, separated by narrow lanes, squares, and dead ends on which the produce was displayed wherever it happened to be—in shops, in the open air, or even on the pavement of the streets." This swarming hive, this maze, this chaos was *Les Halles de Paris* as they had been abandoned by the Old Regime, which had installed them in that same spot in the remote days of the Capetian kings Louis VI (The Fat) and Philippe Auguste between 1135 and 1180. This spectacle did not find favor with the Emperor. He decided to raze everything and to give the capital of his Empire the kind of market it deserved. The decree which he signed on February 24, 1811, provided for the clearing and preparation of a vast parallelogram covering all the space between rue Saint Denis and the *Halle au Blé*. The estimates and plans were to be submitted to him by June 1 of the same year, and the work was to be completed by 1814.

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But the god of war decided otherwise, and did not grant the leisure to carry out the imperial plan. Paris was to wait almost another half-century before it saw arise in the shadow of the Eglise Saint-Eustache the double rectilinear row of ten pavilions of metal and glass conceived and executed by the architect Victor Baltard, winner of the Grand Prix de Rome, boarder at the Villa Medicis under Monsieur Ingres (who "drew" his portrait), and creator of the Eglise Saint-Augustin and the grand staircase of the Hôtel de Ville in Paris.

The appearance of this unusual structure, whose cornerstone was laid September 15, 1851, and which was dedicated in 1857 by Emperor Napoleon III, did not fail to provoke diverse and contradictory reactions: dissatisfaction and disapproval from some; admiration and somewhat hysterical enthusiasm from others. "On this site a veritable palace of iron and crystal is rising," announced the introductory prospectus to the monograph devoted to *Les Halles* by their builders. Part of the public echoed this note and even improved on it; Zola writes in *Le Ventre de Paris*, "...There were sudden vistas, unexpected architectural forms, the same horizon continually being presented from different points of view... an illusion of shapes of houses and palaces superimposed on each other, a metallic Babylon of Hindu weightlessness, covered with hanging terraces, aerial passageways suspended over space..."

No doubt it is difficult today for us to share the lyrical ecstasies of one of our most naturalistic novelists. The sight of the hundred-year-old *Halles*, when we approach them during the hours of their dominical silence and solitude, does not seem particularly stirring. But now that total destruction threatens *Les Halles*, although no specific or final decision has been made about the aftermath of the transfer or the utilization of the urban space thus cleared, it should be remembered that the achievement of Baltard and his collaborators is one of the first and few remaining examples—not just in France, but in Europe—of the beginning of metal architecture. On this ground alone it is entitled to the preservation demanded for it by its infrequent defenders.

—LUCE HOCTIN

translated from the French by Helen Weaver

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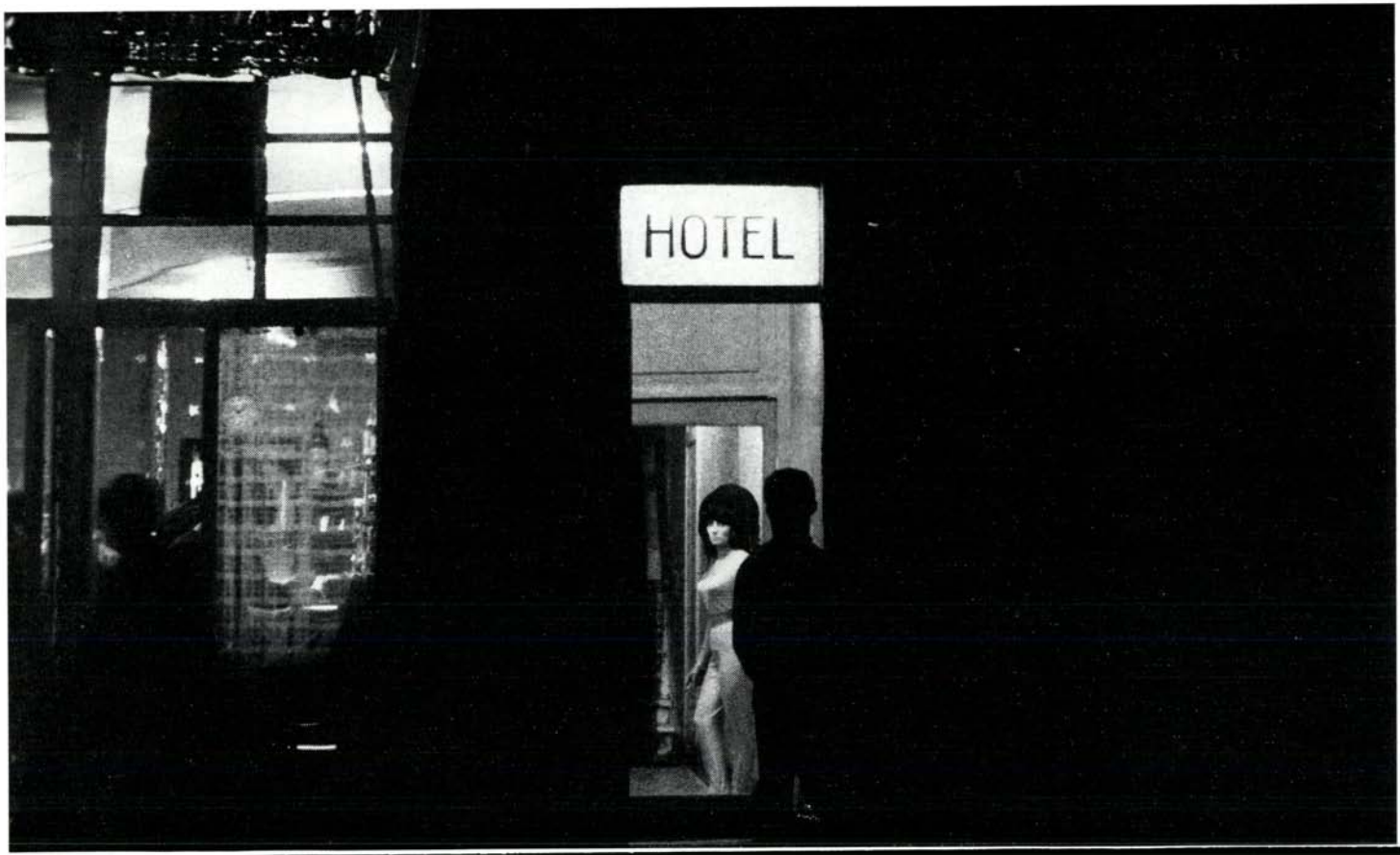

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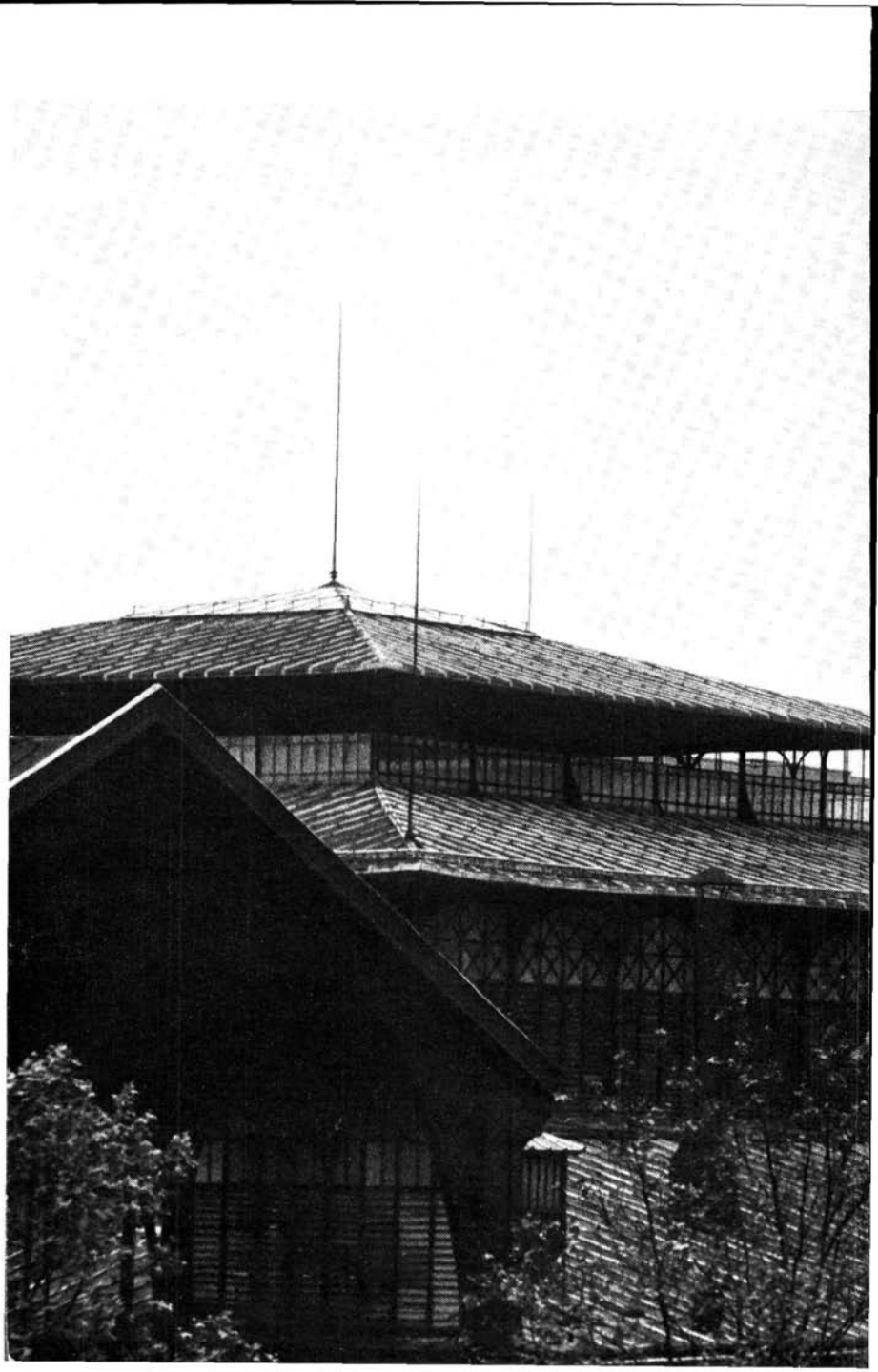

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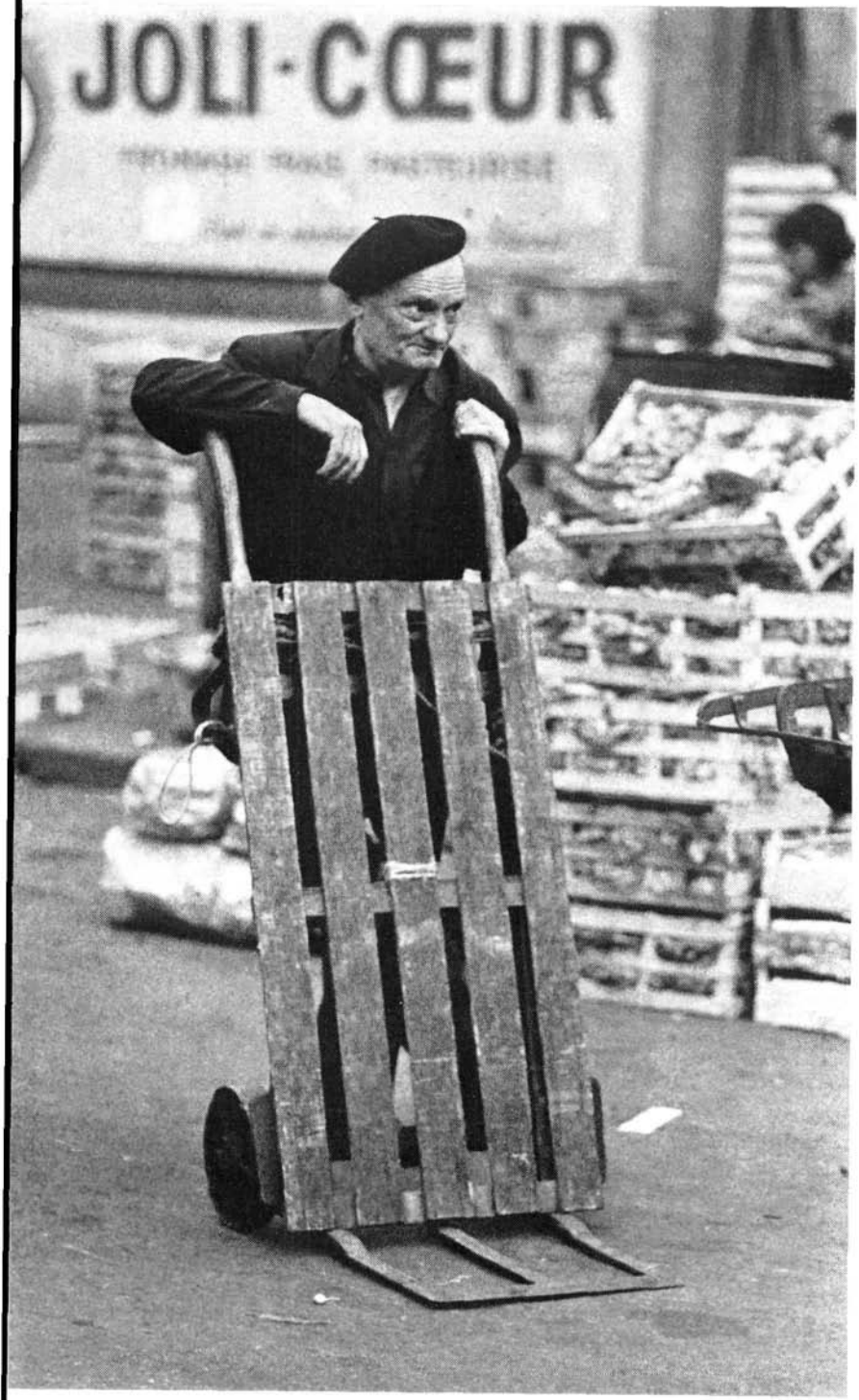

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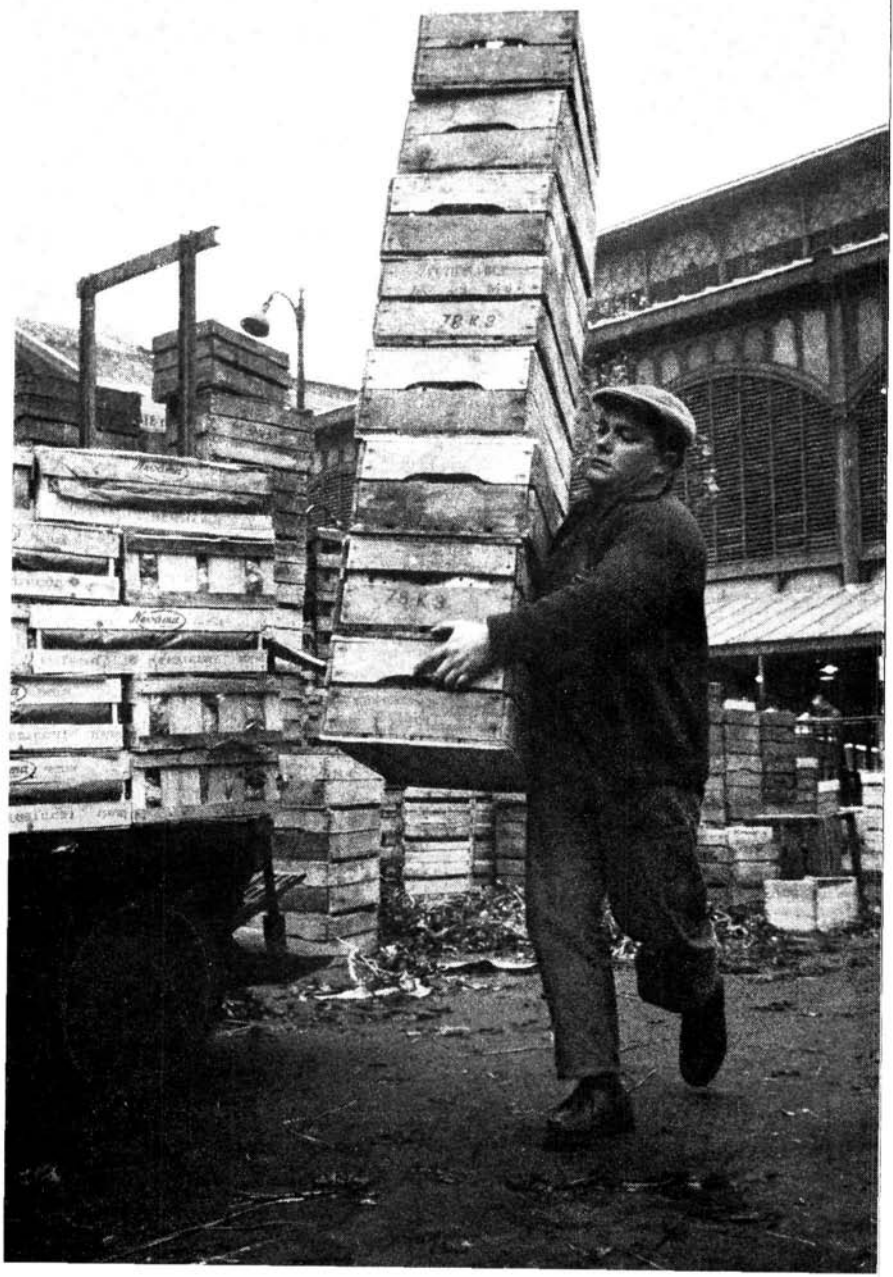

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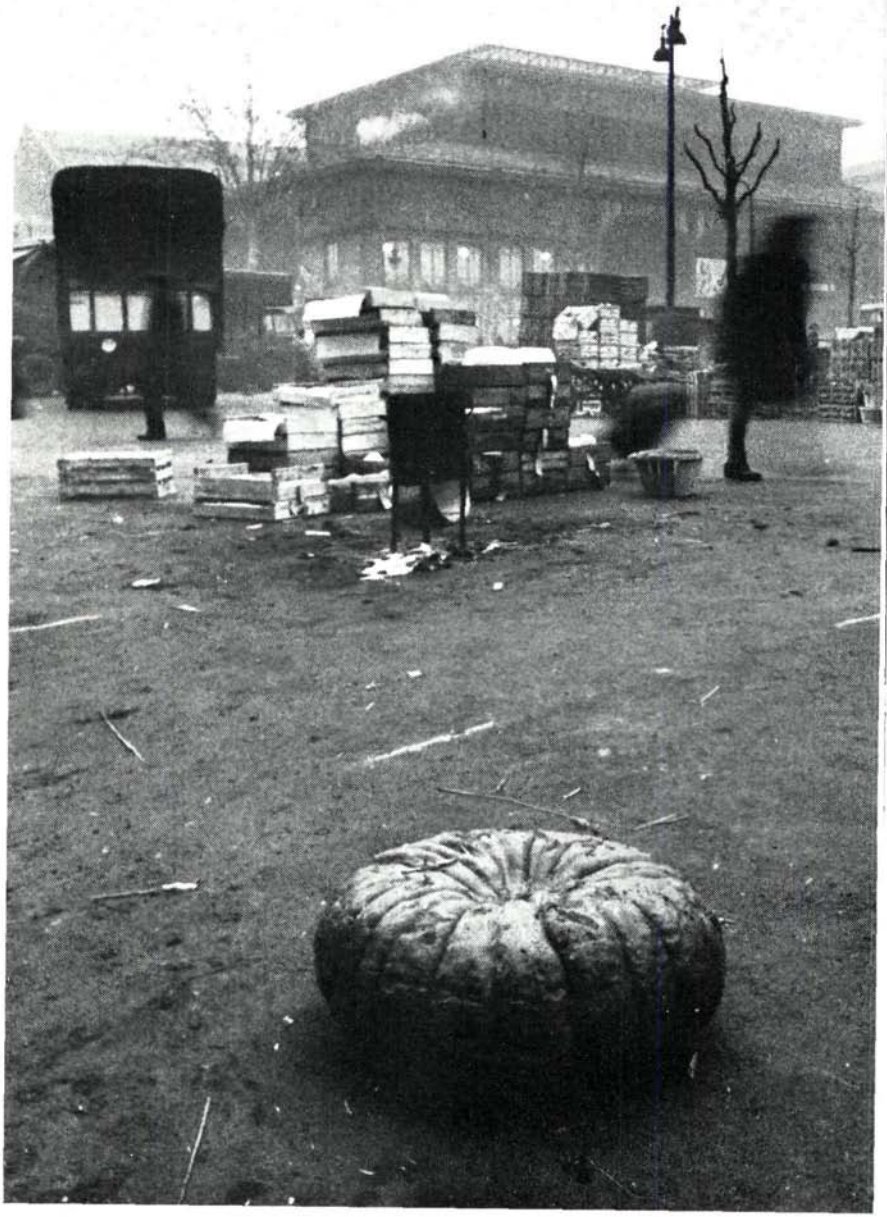

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Ted Berrigan

from *The Sonnets*

LI

Summer so histrionic, marvelous dirty days
is not genuine it shines forth from the faces
littered with soup, cigarette butts, the heavy
is a correspondent the innocence of childhood
sadness greying the faces of virgins aching
and everything comes before their eyes
to be fucked, we fondle their snatches but they
that the angels have supereminent wisdom is shown
they weep and get solemn etcetera
from thought for all things come to them gratuitously
by their speech it flows directly and spontaneously
and O, I am afraid! but later they'll be eyeing the butts
of the studs
in the street rain flushing the gutters bringing from
Memphis
Gus Cannon gulping, "I called myself Banjo Joe!"

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LII

for Richard White

It is a human universe: & I
is a correspondent the innocence of childhood
is not genuine it shines forth from the faces
The poem upon the page is as massive as Anne's thighs
Belly to hot belly we have laid
baffling combustions
are everywhere greying the faces of virgins
aching to be fucked we fondle their snatches
and O, I am afraid! The poem upon the page
will not kneel for everything comes to it
gratuitously like Gertrude Stein to Radcliffe
Gus Cannon to say "I called myself Banjo Joe!"
O wet kisses, death on earth, lovely fucking
in the poem upon the page
you have kept up with the times, and I am glad!

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LIII

The poem upon the page is as massive as
Anne's thighs belly to hot belly we have laid
Serene beneath feverous folds, flashed cool
in our white heat hungered and tasted and
Gone to the movies baffling combustions
are everywhere! like Gertrude Stein at Radcliffe,
Patsy Padgett replete with teen-age belly! every-
one's suddenly pregnant and no one is glad!
O wet kisses, the poem upon the page
Can tell you about teeth you've never dreamed
Could bite, nor be such reassurance. Babies are not
Like Word Origins and cribbage boards or dreams
of correspondence! Fucking is so very lovely
Who can say no to it later?

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The Art of Fiction XXXIX

Jorge Luis Borges

An Interview

Jorge Luis Borges is an Argentine writer who started publishing poetry and essays in the 1920's but achieved his greatest success in the stories which began to appear in the late 1930's and were subsequently collected in the volumes Ficciones *and* El Aleph. *In 1961 he shared the International Publishers Prize with Samuel Beckett, and today is often referred to as the greatest living writer in Spanish.*

This interview was conducted in July, 1966, in conversations I held with Borges at his office in the Biblioteca Nacional, of which he is the Director. The room, recalling an older Buenos Aires, is not really an office at all, but a large, ornate, high-ceilinged chamber in the newly renovated library. On the walls—but far too high to be easily read, as if hung with diffidence— are various academic certificates and literary citations. There are also several Piranesi etchings, bringing to mind the nightmarish Piranesi ruin in Borges' story, "The Immortal." Over the fireplace is a large portrait; when I asked Borges' secretary, Miss Susana Quinteros, about the portrait, she responded in a fitting, if unintentional echo of a basic Borgesean theme: "No importa. *It's a reproduction of another painting."*

At diagonally opposite corners of the room are two large, revolving bookcases which contain, Miss Quinteros explained, books

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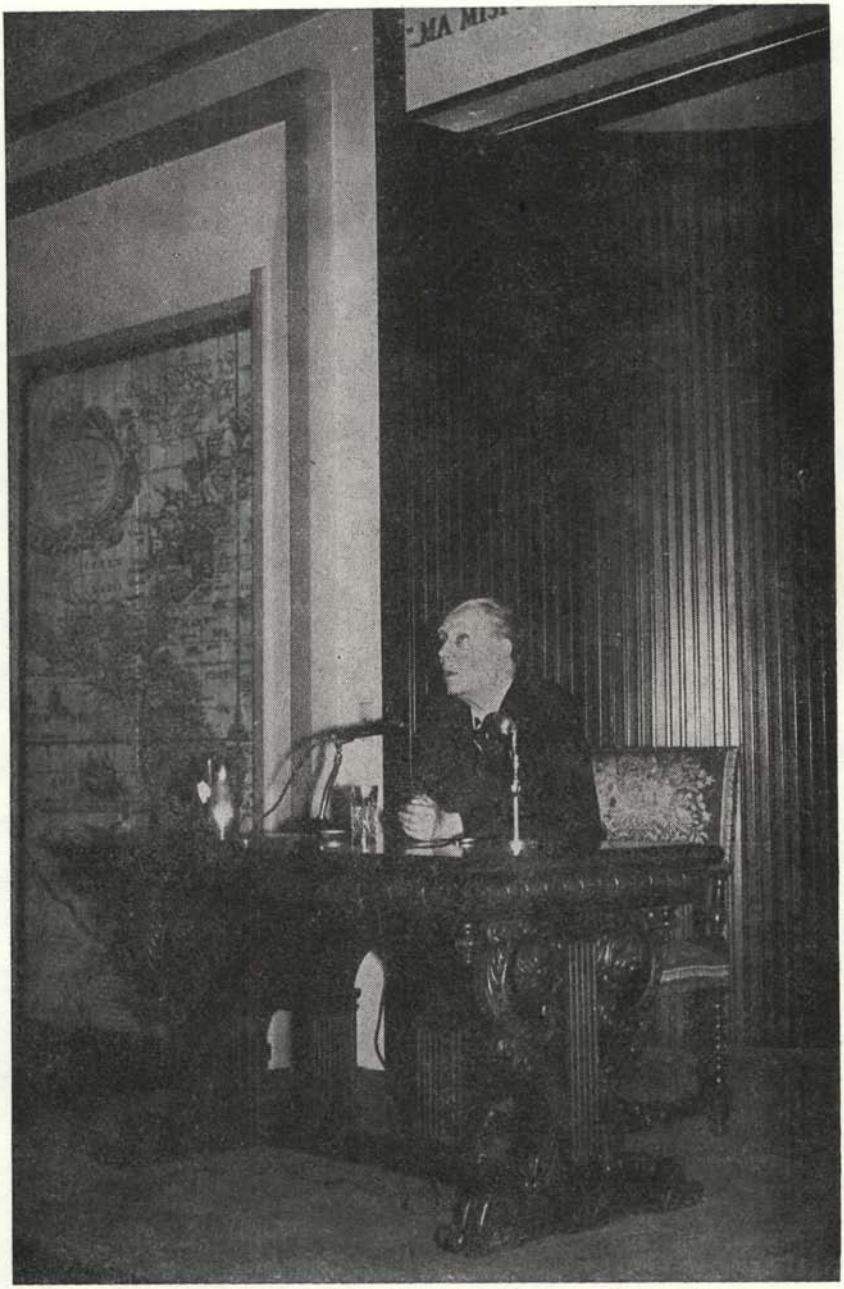

Borges lecturing at the Instituto Italiano de Cultura in Buenos Aires.

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Borges frequently consults, all arranged in a certain order and never varied so that Borges, who is nearly blind, can find them by position and size. The dictionaries, for instance, are set together, among them an old, sturdily rebacked, well-worn copy of Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language *and an equally well-worn Anglo-Saxon dictionary. Among the other volumes, ranging from books in German and English on theology and philosophy to literature and history, are the complete* Pelican Guide to English Literature, *the* Modern Library Francis Bacon, *Hollander's* The Poetic Eddas, The Poems of Catullus, *Forsyth's* Geometry of Four Dimensions, *several volumes of* Harrap's English Classics, *Parkman's* The Conspiracy of Pontiac, *and the Chambers edition of* Beowulf. *Recently, Miss Quinteros said, Borges had been reading* The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War, *and just the night before he had taken to his home, where his mother, who is in her nineties, reads aloud to him, Washington Irving's* Life of Mahomet.

Each day, late in the afternoon, Borges arrives at the library where it is now his custom to dictate letters and poems which Miss Quinteros types and reads back to him. Following his revisions, she makes two or three, sometimes four copies of each poem before Borges is satisfied. Some afternoons she reads to him, and he carefully corrects her English pronunciation. Occasionally when he wants to think, Borges leaves his office and slowly circles the library's rotunda, high above the readers at the tables below. But he is not always serious, Miss Quinteros stressed, confirming what one might expect from his writing: "Always there are jokes, little practical jokes."

When Borges entered the library, wearing a beret and a dark grey flannel suit hanging loosely from his shoulders and sagging over his shoes, everyone stopped talking for a moment, pausing, perhaps out of respect, perhaps out of empathetic hesitation for a man who is not entirely blind. His walk is tentative, and he carries a cane which he uses like a divining rod. He is short, with hair that looks slightly unreal in the way it rises from his head. His features are vague, softened by age, partially erased by the paleness of his skin. His voice, too, is unemphatic, almost a drone, seeming, possibly because of the unfocused expression of his eyes, to come from another person behind the face, and his gestures and expressions are lethargic—charac-

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teristic is the involuntary droop of one eyelid. But when he laughs—and he laughs often—his features wrinkle into what actually resembles a wry question mark; and he is apt to make a sweeping or clearing gesture with his arm and to bring his hand down on the table. Most of his statements take the form of rhetorical questions, but in asking a genuine question, Borges displays now a looming curiosity, now a shy, almost pathetic incredulity. When he chooses, as in telling a joke, he adopts a crisp, dramatic tone, and his quotation of a line from Oscar Wilde would do justice to an Edwardian actor. His accent defies easy classification: a cosmopolitan diction emerging from a Spanish background, educated by correct English speech and influenced by American movies. (Certainly no Englishman ever pronounced piano *as* pie-ano, *and no American says* a-nee-hilates *for* annihilates.) *The predominant quality of his articulation is the way his words slur softly into one another, allowing suffixes to dwindle so that* couldn't *and* could *are virtually indistinguishable. Slangy and informal when he wants to be, more typically he is formal and bookish in his English speech, relying, quite naturally, on phrases like "that is to say" and "wherein." Always his sentences are linked by the narrative "and then" or the logical "consequently."*

But most of all, Borges is shy. Retiring, even self-obliterating, he avoids personal statement as much as possible and obliquely answers questions about himself by talking of other writers, using their words and even their books as emblems of his own thought.

In this interview it has been attempted to preserve the colloquial quality of his English speech—an illuminating contrast to his writings and a revelation of his intimacy with a language that has figured so importantly in the development of his writing.

INTERVIEWER

You don't object to my recording our conversations?

BORGES

No, no. You fix the gadgets. They are a hindrance, but I will try to talk as if they're not there. Now where are you from?

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INTERVIEWER

From New York.

BORGES

Ah, New York. I was there and I liked it very much—I said to myself: "Well, I have made this; this is my work."

INTERVIEWER

You mean the walls of the high buildings, the maze of streets?

BORGES

Yes. I rambled about the streets—Fifth Avenue—and got lost, but the people were always kind. I remember answering many questions about my work from tall, shy young men. In Texas they had told me to be afraid of New York, but I liked it. Well, are you ready?

INTERVIEWER

Yes, the machine is already working.

BORGES

Now, before we start, what kind of questions are they?

INTERVIEWER

Mostly about your own work and about English writers you have expressed an interest in.

BORGES

Ah, that's right. Because if you ask me questions about the younger contemporary writers, I'm afraid I know very little about them. For about the last seven years I've been doing my best to know something of Old English and Old Norse. Consequently, that's a long way off in time and space from the Argentine, from Argentine writers, no? But if I have to speak to you about the *Finnsburg Fragment* or the elegies or the *Battle of Brunanburg*...

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INTERVIEWER

Would you like to talk about those?

BORGES

No, not especially.

INTERVIEWER

What made you decide to study Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse?

BORGES

I began by being very interested in metaphor. And then in some book or other—I think in Andrew Lang's *History of English Literature*—I read about the kennings, metaphors of Old English, and in a far more complex fashion of Old Norse poetry. Then I went in for the study of Old English. Nowadays, or rather today, after several years of study, I'm no longer interested in the metaphors, because I think that they were rather a weariness of the flesh to the poets themselves—at least to the Old English poets.

INTERVIEWER

To repeat them you mean?

BORGES

To repeat them, to use them over and over again and to keep on speaking of the *hronrad*, *waelrad*, or "road of the whale" instead of "the sea"—that kind of thing—and "the sea-wood," "the stallion of the sea" instead of "the ship." So I decided finally to stop using them, the metaphors that is; but in the meanwhile I had begun studying the language and I fell in love with it. Now I have formed a group—we're about six or seven students—and we study almost every day. We've been going through the highlights in *Beowulf*, the *Finnsburg Fragment* and *The Dream of the Rood*. Also, we've gotten into King Alfred's prose. Now we've begun learning Old Norse, which is rather akin to Old English. I mean the vocabularies are not really very different: Old English is a kind of half-way house between the Low German and the Scandinavian.

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INTERVIEWER

Epic literature has always interested you very much, hasn't it?

BORGES

Always, yes. For example, there are many people who go to the cinema and cry. That has always happened: it has happened to me also. But I have never cried over sob stuff, or the pathetic episodes. But, for example, when I saw the first gangster films of Sternberg I remember that when there was anything epic about them—I mean Chicago gangsters dying bravely—well, I felt that my eyes were full of tears. I have felt epic poetry far more than lyric or elegy. I *always* felt that. Now that may be, perhaps, because I come from military stock. My grandfather, Colonel Borges, fought in the border warfare with the Indians and he died in a revolution; my great grandfather, Colonel Suarez, led a Peruvian calvary charge in one of the last great battles against the Spaniards; another great uncle of mine led the vanguard of San Martin's army—that kind of thing. And I had, well, one of my great-great-grandmothers was a sister of Rosas*—I'm not especially proud of that relationship, because I think of Rosas as being a kind of Perón in his day; but still all those things link me with Argentine history and also with the idea of a man's having to be brave, no?

INTERVIEWER

But the characters you pick as your epic heroes—the gangster for example—are not usually thought of as epic, are they? Yet you seem to find the epic there?

BORGES

I think there is a kind of, perhaps, of low epic in him—no?

INTERVIEWER

Do you mean that since the old kind of epic is apparently no longer possible for us, we must look to this kind of character for our heroes?

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* Rosas, Juan Manuel de (1793–1877), an Argentinian military dictator.

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BORGES

I think that as to epic poetry or as to epic literature, rather—if we except such writers as T. E. Lawrence in his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* or some poets like Kipling, for example in "Harp Song of the Dane Women" or even in the stories—I think nowadays, while literary men seem to have neglected their epic duties, the epic has been saved for us, strangely enough, by the Westerns.

INTERVIEWER

I have heard that you have seen the film *West Side Story* many times.

BORGES

Many times, yes. Of course, *West Side Story* is not a Western.

INTERVIEWER

No, but for you it has the same epic qualities?

BORGES

I think it has, yes. During this century, as I say, the epic tradition has been saved for the world by, of all places, Hollywood. When I went to Paris, I felt I wanted to shock people, and when they asked me—they knew that I was interested in the films, or that I had been, because my eyesight is very dim now—and they asked me, "What kind of film do you like?" And I said, "Candidly, what I most enjoy are the Westerns." They were all Frenchmen; they fully agreed with me. They said, "Of course we see such films as *Hiroshima, mon amour* or *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* out of a sense of duty, but when we want to amuse ourselves, when we want to enjoy ourselves, when we want, well, to get a real kick, then we see American films."

INTERVIEWER

Then it is the content, the "literary" content of the film, rather than any of the technical aspects of the movies that interests you?

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BORGES

I know very little about the technical part of movies.

INTERVIEWER

If I may change the subject to your own fiction, I would like to ask about your having said that you were very timid about beginning to write stories.

BORGES

Yes, I was very timid, because when I was young I thought of myself as a poet. So I thought: "If I write a story everybody will know I'm an outsider, that I am intruding in forbidden ground." Then I had an accident. You can feel the scar. If you touch my head here, you will see. Feel all those mountains, bumps? Then I spent a fortnight in a hospital. I had nightmares and sleeplessness—insomnia. After that they told me that I had been in danger, well, of dying, that it was really a wonderful thing that the operation had been successful. I began to fear for my mental integrity—I said, "Maybe I can't write anymore." Then my life would have been practically over, because literature is very important to me. Not because I think my own stuff particularly good, but because I know that I can't get along without writing. If I don't write, I feel, well, a kind of remorse, no? Then I thought I would try my hand at writing an article or a poem. But I thought: "I have written hundreds of articles and poems. If I can't do it, then I'll know at once that I am done for, that everything is over with me." So I thought I'd try my hand at something I hadn't done: if I couldn't do it, there would be nothing strange about it, because why should I write short stories?—It would prepare me for the final overwhelming blow: knowing that I was at the end of my tether. I wrote a story called, let me see, I think, "*Hombre de la esquina rosada*,"* and everyone enjoyed it very much. It was a great relief to me. If it hadn't been for that particular knock on the head I got, perhaps I would never have written short stories.

* This is, perhaps, a slip of memory: the story was "*Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote*," published in *Sur*, number 56 (May, 1959).

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INTERVIEWER

And perhaps you would never have been translated?

BORGES

And no one would have thought of translating me. So it was a blessing in disguise. Those stories, somehow or other, made their way: they got translated into French, I won the Formentor Prize, and then I seemed to be translated into many tongues. The first translator was Ibarra. He was a close friend of mine and he translated the stories into French. I think he greatly improved upon them, no?

INTERVIEWER

Ibarra, not Caillois, was the first translator?

BORGES

He and Roger Caillois. At a ripe old age, I began to find that many people were interested in my work all over the world. It seems strange: many of my writings have been done into English, into Swedish, into French, into Italian, into German, into Portuguese, into some of the Slav languages, into Danish. And always this comes as a great surprise to me, because I remember I published a book—that must have been way back in 1932, I think—and at the end of the year I found out that no less than thirty-seven copies had been sold!

INTERVIEWER

Was that the *Universal History of Infamy?*

BORGES

No, no. *History of Eternity*. At first I wanted to find every single one of the buyers to apologize because of the book and also to thank them for what they had done. There is an explanation for that. If you think of thirty-seven people—those people are real, I mean every one of them has a face of his own, a family, he lives in his own particular street. Why, if you sell, say two thousand copies, it is the same thing as if you had sold nothing at all, because two thousand is too vast—I

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mean, for the imagination to grasp. While thirty-seven people—perhaps thirty-seven are too many, perhaps seventeen would have been better or even seven—but still thirty-seven are still within the scope of one's imagination.

INTERVIEWER

Speaking of numbers, I notice in your stories that certain numbers occur repeatedly.

BORGES

Oh, yes. I'm awfully superstitious. I'm ashamed about it. I tell myself that after all, superstition is, I suppose, a slight form of madness, no?

INTERVIEWER

Or of religion?

BORGES

Well, religion, but... I suppose that if one attained one hundred and fifty years of age, one would be quite mad, no? Because all those small symptoms would have been growing. Still, I see my mother, who is ninety, and she has far fewer superstitions than I have. Now, when I was reading for the tenth time, I suppose, Boswell's *Johnson*, I found that he was full of superstition, and at the same time, that he had a great fear of madness. In the prayers he composed, one of the things he asked God was that he should not be a madman, so he must have been worried about it.

INTERVIEWER

Would you say that it is the same reason—superstition—that causes you to use the same colors—red, yellow, green—again and again?

BORGES

But do I use green?

INTERVIEWER

Not as often as the others. But you see I did a rather trivial thing, I counted the colors in...

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BORGES

No, no. That is called *estilística;* here it is studied. No, I think you'll find yellow.

INTERVIEWER

But red too, often moving, fading into rose.

BORGES

Really? Well, I never knew that.

INTERVIEWER

It's as if the world today were a cinder of yesterday's fire—that's a metaphor you use. You speak of "Red Adam," for example.

BORGES

Well, the word *Adam*, I think, in the Hebrew means "red earth." Besides it sounds well, no? "*Rojo Adan.*"

INTERVIEWER

Yes it does. But that's not something you intend to show: the degeneration of the world by the metaphorical use of color?

BORGES

I don't intend to show anything. *(Laughter)* I have no intentions.

INTERVIEWER

Just to describe?

BORGES

I describe. I write. Now as for the color yellow, there is a physical explanation of that. When I began to lose my sight, the last color I saw, or the last color, rather, that stood out, because of course now I know that your coat is not the same color as this table or of the woodwork behind you—the last color to stand out was yellow, because it is the most vivid of

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colors. That's why you have the Yellow Cab Company in the United States. At first they thought of making the cars scarlet. Then somebody found out that at night or when there was a fog that yellow stood out in a more vivid way than scarlet. So you have yellow cabs because anybody can pick them out. Now when I began to lose my eyesight, when the world began to fade away from me, there was a time among my friends... well they made, they poked fun at me because I was always wearing yellow neckties. Then they thought I really liked yellow although it really was too glaring. I said, "Yes, to you, but not to me, because it is the only color I can see, practically!" I live in a grey world, rather like the silver screen world. But yellow stands out. That might account for it. I remember a joke of Oscar Wilde's: a friend of his had a tie with yellow, red, and so on in it, and Wilde said, "Oh, my dear fellow, only a deaf man could wear a tie like that!"

INTERVIEWER

He might have been talking about the yellow necktie I have on now.

BORGES

Ah, well. I remember telling that story to a lady who missed the whole point. She said, "Of course, it must be because being deaf he couldn't hear what people were saying about his necktie." That might have amused Oscar Wilde, no?

INTERVIEWER

I'd like to have heard his reply to that.

BORGES

Yes, of course. I never heard of such a case of something being so perfectly misunderstood. The perfection of stupidity. Of course, Wilde's remark is a witty translation of an idea; in Spanish as well as English you speak of a "loud color." A "loud color" is a common phrase, but then the things that are said in literature are always the same. What is important

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is the way they are said. Looking for metaphors, for example: when I was a young man I was always hunting for new metaphors. Then I found out that really good metaphors are always the same. I mean you compare time to a road, death to sleeping, life to dreaming, and those are the great metaphors in literature, because they correspond to something essential. If you invent metaphors, they are apt to be surprising during the fraction of a second, but they strike no deep emotion whatever. If you think of life as a dream, that is a thought, a thought that is real, or at least that most men are bound to have, no? "What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed." I think that's better than the idea of shocking people, than finding connections between things that have never been connected before, because there is no real connection, so the whole thing is a kind of juggling.

INTERVIEWER

Juggling just words?

BORGES

Just words. I wouldn't even call them real metaphors because in a real metaphor both terms are really linked together. I have found one exception—a strange, new and beautiful metaphor from Old Norse poetry. In Old English poetry a battle is spoken of as the "play of swords" or the "encounter of spears." But in Old Norse, and I think also in Celtic poetry, a battle is called a "web of men." That is strange, no? Because in a web you have a pattern, a weaving of men, *un tejido*. I suppose in medieval battle you got a kind of web because of having the swords and spears on opposite sides and so on. So there you have, I think, a new metaphor; and, of course, with a nightmare touch about it, no? The idea of a web made of living men, of living things, and still being a web, still being a pattern. It is a strange idea, no?

INTERVIEWER

It corresponds, in a general way, to the metaphor George Eliot uses in *Middlemarch*, that society is a web and one cannot disentangle a strand without touching all the others.

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BORGES

(With great interest) Who said that?

INTERVIEWER

George Eliot, in *Middlemarch*.

BORGES

Ah, *Middlemarch*! Yes, of course! You mean the whole universe is linked together; everything linked. Well that's one of the reasons the Stoic philosophers had for believing in omens. There's a paper, a very interesting paper, as all of his are, by De Quincey on modern superstition, and there he gives the Stoic theory. The idea is that since the whole universe is one living thing, then there is a kinship between things that seem far off. For example, if thirteen people dine together, one of them is bound to die within the year. Not merely because of Jesus Christ and the Last Supper, but also because *all* things are bound together. He said—I wonder how that sentence runs—that everything in the world is a secret glass or secret mirror of the universe.

INTERVIEWER

You have often spoken of the people who have influenced you, like De Quincey...

BORGES

De Quincey greatly, yes, and Schopenhauer in German. Yes, in fact, during the First World War, I was led by Carlyle —Carlyle: I rather dislike him: I think he invented Nazism and so on: one of the fathers or forefathers of such things— well, I was led by Carlyle to a study of German and I tried my hand at Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Of course, I got bogged down as most people do—as most Germans do. Then I said, "Well, I'll try their poetry, because poetry has to be shorter because of the verse." I got hold of a copy of Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo* and an English-German dictionary and at the end of two or three months I found I could get on fairly well without the aid of a dictionary.

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I remember the first English novel I read through was a Scottish novel called *House with the Green Shutters.*

INTERVIEWER

Who wrote that?

BORGES

A man called Douglas. Then that was plagiarized by the man who wrote *Hatter's Castle*—Cronin—there was the same plot, practically. The book was written in the Scots dialect—I mean people instead of saying *money* speak of *baubees* or instead of *children, bairns*—that's an Old English and Norse word also—and they say *nicht* for *night:* that's Old English.

INTERVIEWER

And how old were you when you read that?

BORGES

I must have been about—there were many things I didn't understand—I must have been about ten or eleven. Before that, of course, I had read the *Jungle Books* and I had read Stevenson's *Treasure Island,* a very fine book. But the first real novel was that novel. When I read that, I wanted to be Scotch, and then I asked my grandmother and she was very indignant about it. She said, "Thank goodness that you're not!" Of course, maybe she was wrong. She came from Northumberland; they must have had some Scottish blood in them. Perhaps even Danish blood way back.

INTERVIEWER

With this long interest in English and your great love of it...

BORGES

Look here, I'm talking to an American: there's a book I *must* speak about—nothing unexpected about it—that book is *Huckleberry Finn.* I thoroughly dislike *Tom Sawyer.* I think

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that Tom Sawyer spoils the last chapters of *Huckleberry Finn*. All those silly jokes. They are all pointless jokes; but I suppose Mark Twain thought it was his duty to be funny, even when he wasn't in the mood. The jokes had to be worked in somehow. According to what George Moore said, the English always thought: "Better a bad joke than no joke."

I think that Mark Twain was one of the really great writers but I think he was rather unaware of the fact. But perhaps in order to write a really great book, you *must* be rather unaware of the fact. You can slave away at it and change every adjective to some other adjective, but perhaps you can write better if you leave the mistakes. I remember what Bernard Shaw said, that as to style, a writer has as much style as his conviction will give him and not more. Shaw thought that the idea of a game of style was quite nonsensical, quite meaningless. He thought of Bunyan, for example, as a great writer because he was convinced of what he was saying. If a writer disbelieves what he is writing, then he can hardly expect his readers to believe it. In this country, though, there is a tendency to regard any kind of writing—especially the writing of poetry—as a game of style. I have known many poets here who have written well—very fine stuff—with delicate moods and so on—but if you talk with them, the only thing they tell you is smutty stories or speak of politics in the way that everybody does, so that really their writing turns out to be kind of sideshow. They had learned writing in the way that a man might learn to play chess or to play bridge. They were not really poets or writers at all. It was a trick they had learned and they had learned it thoroughly. They had the whole thing at their finger ends. But most of them—except four or five I should say—seemed to think of life as having nothing poetic or mysterious about it. They take things for granted. They know that when they have to write, then, well, they have to suddenly become rather sad or ironic.

INTERVIEWER

To put on their writer's hat?

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BORGES

Yes, put on the writer's hat and get into a right mood, and then write. Afterward, they fall back on current politics.

SUSANA QUINTEROS *(Entering)*

Excuse me. Señor Campbell is waiting.

BORGES

Ah, please ask him to wait a moment. Well, there's a Mr. Campbell waiting; the Campbells are coming.

INTERVIEWER

When you wrote your stories, did you revise a great deal?

BORGES

At first I did. Then I found out that when a man reaches a certain age he has found his real tone. Nowadays, I try to go over what I've written after a fortnight or so and of course there are many slips and repetitions to be avoided, certain favorite tricks that should not be overworked. But I think that what I write nowadays is always on a certain level and that I can't better it very much nor can I spoil it very much either. Consequently I let it go, forget all about it, and think about what I'm doing at the time. The last things I have been writing are *milongas*, popular songs.

INTERVIEWER

Yes, I saw a volume of them, a beautiful book.

BORGES

Yes, *Para Seis Cuerdas*, meaning, of course, the guitar. The guitar was a popular instrument when I was a boy. Then you would find people strumming the guitar, not too skilfully, at nearly every street corner of every town. Some of the best tangos were composed by people who couldn't write them nor read them. But of course they had music in their souls, as Shakespeare might have said. So they dictated them to somebody: they were played on the piano, and they got written down and they were published for the literate people. I remember I met one of them—Ernesto Poncio. He wrote "Don

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Juan," one of the best tangos before the tangos were spoiled by the Italians in La Boca and so on: I mean when the tangos came from the *criolla*. He once said to me: "I have been in jail many times, Señor Borges, but always for manslaughter!" What he meant to say was that he wasn't a thief or a pimp.

INTERVIEWER

In your *Antología Personal*...

BORGES

Look here, I want to say that that book is full of misprints. My eyesight is very dim, and the proofreading had to be done by somebody else.

INTERVIEWER

I see, but those are only minor errors, aren't they?

BORGES

Yes, I know, but they creep in and they worry the writer, not the reader. The reader accepts anything, no? Even the starkest nonsense.

INTERVIEWER

What was your principle of selection in that book?

BORGES

My principle of selection was simply that I felt the stuff was better than what I had left out. Of course, if I had been cleverer I would have insisted on leaving out those stories and then after my death someone would have found out that what had been left out was really good. That would have been a cleverer thing to do, no? I mean to publish all the weak stuff, then to let somebody find out that I had left out the real things.

INTERVIEWER

You like jokes very much, don't you?

BORGES

Yes, I do, yes.

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INTERVIEWER

But the people who write about your books, your fiction in particular...

BORGES

No, no—they write far too seriously.

INTERVIEWER

They seldom seem to recognize that some of them are very funny.

BORGES

They are meant to be funny. Now a book will come out called *Crónicas de H. Bustos Domecq* written with Adolpho Bioy Casares. That book will be about architects, poets, novelists, sculptors and so on. All the characters are imaginary and they are all very up-to-date, very modern; they take themselves very seriously; so does the writer, but they are not actually parodies of anybody. We are simply going as far as a certain thing can be done. For example, many writers from here tell me: "We would like to have your message." You see, we have no message at all. When I write, I write because a thing has to be done. I don't think a writer should meddle too much with his own work. He should let the work write itself, no?

INTERVIEWER

You have said that a writer should never be judged by his ideas.

BORGES

No, I don't think ideas are important.

INTERVIEWER

Well then, what should he be judged by?

BORGES

He should be judged by the enjoyment he gives and by the emotions one gets. As to ideas, after all it is not very important whether a writer has some political opinion or other, because a work will come through despite them as in the case of

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Kipling's *Kim*. Suppose you consider the idea of the empire of the English—well, in *Kim* I think the characters one really is fond of are not the English, but many of the Indians, the Mussulmans. I think they're nicer people. And that's because he thought them—No! No! not because he thought them nicer —because he *felt* them nicer.

INTERVIEWER

What about metaphysical ideas then?

BORGES

Ah, well, metaphysical ideas, yes. They can be worked into parables and so on.

INTERVIEWER

Readers very often call your stories parables. Do you like that description?

BORGES

No, no. They're not meant to be parables. I mean if they are parables... *(long pause)*... that is, if they are parables, they have *happened* to be parables, but my intention has never been to write parables.

INTERVIEWER

Not like Kafka's parables then?

BORGES

In the case of Kafka, we know very little. We only know that he was very dissatisfied with his own work. Of course, when he told his friend, Max Brod, that he wanted his manuscripts to be burned, as Vergil did, I suppose he knew that his friend wouldn't do that. If a man wants to destroy his own work, he throws it into a fire, and there it goes. When he tells a close friend of his: "I want all the manuscripts to be destroyed," he knows that the friend will never do that, and the friend knows that he knows and that he knows that the other knows that he knows and so on and so forth.

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INTERVIEWER

It's all very Jamesian.

BORGES

Yes, of course. I think that the whole world of Kafka is to be found in a far more complex way in the stories of Henry James. I think that they both thought of the world as being at the same time complex and meaningless.

INTERVIEWER

Meaningless?

BORGES

Don't you think so?

INTERVIEWER

No, I don't really think so. In the case of James...

BORGES

But in the case of James, yes. In the case of James, yes. I don't think he thought the world had any moral purpose. I think he disbelieved in God. In fact I think there's a letter written to his brother, the psychologist William James, wherein he says that the world is a diamond museum, let's say a collection of oddities, no? I suppose he meant that. Now in the case of Kafka, I think Kafka was looking for something.

INTERVIEWER

For some meaning?

BORGES

For some meaning, yes; and not finding it, perhaps. But I think that they both lived in a kind of maze, no?

INTERVIEWER

I would agree to that. A book like *The Sacred Fount* for example.

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BORGES

Yes, *The Sacred Fount* and many short stories. For example, "The Abasement of the Northmores," where the whole story is a beautiful revenge, but a revenge that the reader never knows will happen or not. The woman is very sure that her husband's work, which nobody seems to have read or care about, is far better than the work of his famous friend. But maybe the whole thing is untrue. Maybe she was just led by her love for him. One doesn't know whether those letters, when they are published, will really come to anything. Of course James was trying to write two or three stories at one time. That's the reason why he never gave any explanation. The explanation would have made the story poorer. He said: "*The Turn of the Screw* was just a pot-boiler, don't worry about it." But I don't think that was the truth. For instance, he said, "Well, if I give explanations, then the story will be poorer because the alternative explanations will be left out." I think he did that on purpose.

INTERVIEWER

I agree; people shouldn't know.

BORGES

People shouldn't know, and perhaps he didn't know himself!

INTERVIEWER

Do you like to have the same effect on your readers?

BORGES

Oh, yes. Of course I do. But I think the stories of Henry James are far above his novels. What's important in the stories of Henry James are the situations created, not the characters. *The Sacred Fount* would be far better if you could tell one character from the other. But you have to wade through some three hundred pages in order to find out who Lady So-and-so's lover was, and then at the end you may guess that it was So-and-so and not What's-his-name. You can't tell them

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apart; they all speak in the same way; there are no real characters. Only the American seems to stand out. If you think of Dickens, well, while the characters don't seem to stand out, they are far more important than the plot.

INTERVIEWER

Would you say that your own stories have their point of origin in a situation, not in a character?

BORGES

In a situation, right. Except for the idea of bravery, of which I'm very fond. Bravery, perhaps, because I'm not very brave myself.

INTERVIEWER

Is that why there are so many knives and swords and guns in your stories?

BORGES

Yes, that may be. Oh, but there are two causes there: first, seeing the swords at home, because of my grandfather and my great-grandfather and so on. Seeing all those swords. Then I was bred in Palermo, it all was a slum then and people always thought of themselves—I don't say that it was true, but that they always thought of themselves—as being better than the people who lived on a different side of the town—as being better fighters and that kind of thing. Of course, that may have been rubbish. I don't think they were especially brave. To call a man, or to think of him, as a coward—that was the last thing; that's the kind of thing he couldn't stand. I have even known of a case of a man coming from the southern side of the town in order to pick a quarrel with somebody who was famous as a knifer on the north side and getting killed for his pains. They had no real reason to quarrel: they had never seen each other before; there was no question of money or women or anything of the kind. I suppose it was the same thing in the West in the States. Here the thing wasn't done with guns, but with knives.

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INTERVIEWER

Using the knife takes the deed back to an older form of behavior?

BORGES

An older form, yes. Also, it is a more personal idea of courage. Because you can be a good marksman and not especially brave. But if you're going to fight your man at close quarters, and you have knives... I remember I once saw a man challenging another to fight and the other caved in. But he caved in, I think, because of a trick. One was an old hand, he was seventy, and the other was a young and vigorous man, he must have been between twenty-five and thirty. Then the old man, he begged your pardon, he came back with two daggers and one was a span longer than the other. He said: "Here, choose your weapon." So he gave the other the chance of choosing the longer weapon, and having an advantage over him; but that also meant that he felt so sure of himself that he could afford that handicap. The other apologized and caved in, of course. I remember that a brave man, when I was a young man in the slums, he was always supposed to carry a *short* dagger and it was worn here. Like this, *(pointing to his armpit)* so it could be taken out at moment's notice and the slum word for the knife—or one of the slum words—well, one was *el fierro*, but of course that means nothing special. But one of the names, and that has been quite lost—it's a pity—was *el vaivén*, the "come and go." In the word *come-and-go (making gesture)* you see the flash of the knife, the sudden flash.

INTERVIEWER

It's like a gangster's holster?

BORGES

Exactly, yes, like a holster—on the left side. Then it could be taken out at a moment's notice and you scored *el vaivén*. It was spelled as one word and everyone knew it meant *knife*. *El fierro* is rather poor as a name because to call it *the iron* or *the steel* means nothing, while *el vaivén* does.

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SUSANA QUINTEROS *(Entering again)*
Señor Campbell is still waiting.

BORGES
Yes, yes, we know. The Campbells are coming!

INTERVIEWER
Two writers I wanted to ask you about are Joyce and Eliot. You were one of the first readers of Joyce and you even translated part of *Ulysses* into Spanish, didn't you?

BORGES
Yes, I'm afraid I undertook a very faulty translation of the last page of *Ulysses*. Now as to Eliot, at first I thought of him as being a finer critic than a poet; now I think that sometimes he is a very fine poet, but as a critic I find that he's too apt to be always drawing fine distinctions. If you take a great critic, let's say Emerson or Coleridge, you feel that he has read a writer and that his criticism comes from his personal experience of him, while in the case of Eliot you always think—at least I always feel—that he's agreeing with some professor or slightly disagreeing with another. Consequently he's not creative. He's an intelligent man who's drawing fine distinctions, and I suppose he's right; but at the same time after reading, to take a stock example, Coleridge on Shakespeare, especially on the character of Hamlet, a new Hamlet had been created for you, or after reading Emerson on Montaigne or whoever it may be. In Eliot there are no such acts of creation. You feel that he has read many books on the subject—he's agreeing or disagreeing—sometimes making slightly nasty remarks, no?

INTERVIEWER
Yes, that he takes back later.

BORGES
Yes, yes, that he takes back later. Of course, he took those remarks back later because at first he was what might be called nowadays "an angry young man." In the end, I suppose he

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thought of himself as being an English classic and then he found that he had to be polite to his fellow classics, so that afterwards he took back most of the things he had said about Milton or even against Shakespeare. After all, he felt that in some ideal way they were all sharing the same academy.

INTERVIEWER

Did Eliot's work, his poetry, have any effect on your own writing?

BORGES

No, I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER

I have been struck by certain resemblances between *The Waste Land* and your story "The Immortal."

BORGES

Well, there may be something there, but in that case I'm quite unaware of it, because he's not one of the poets I love. I should rank Yeats far above him. In fact, if you don't mind my saying so, I think Frost is a finer poet than Eliot. I mean a finer *poet*. But I suppose Eliot was a far more intelligent man; however, intelligence has little to do with poetry. Poetry springs from something deeper; it's beyond intelligence. It may not even be linked with wisdom. It's a thing of its own; it has a nature of its own. Undefinable. I remember—of course I was a young man—I was even angry when Eliot spoke in a slighting way of Sandburg. I remember he said that Classicism is good—I'm not quoting his words, but the drift of them—because it enabled us to deal with such writers as Mister Carl Sandburg. When one calls a poet "Mister," *(laughter)* it's a word of haughty feelings; it means Mister So-and-so who has found his way into poetry and has no right to be there, who is really an outsider. In Spanish it's still worse because sometimes when we speak of a poet we say "El Doctor So-and-So." Then that annihilates him, that blots him out.

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INTERVIEWER

You like Sandburg then?

BORGES

Yes, I do. Of course, I think Whitman is far more important than Sandburg, but when you read Whitman you think of him as a literary, perhaps a not too learned man of letters, who is doing his best to write in the vernacular and who is using slang as much as he can. In Sandburg the slang seems to come naturally. Now of course there are two Sandburgs: there is the *rough;* but there is also a very delicate Sandburg, especially when he deals with landscapes. Sometimes when he is describing the fog, for example, you are reminded of a Chinese painting. While in other poems of Sandburg you rather think of, well, gangsters, hoodlums, that kind of people. But I suppose he could be both, and I think he was equally sincere: when he was doing his best to be the poet of Chicago and when he wrote in quite a different mood. Another thing that I find strange in Sandburg is that in Whitman—but of course Whitman is Sandburg's father—Whitman is full of hope, while Sandburg writes as if he were writing in the two or three centuries to come. When he writes of the American expeditionary forces or when he writes about empire or the War or so on, he writes as if all those things were dead and gone by.

INTERVIEWER

There is an element of fantasy in his work then—which leads me to ask you about the fantastic. You use the word a great deal in your writing, and I remember that you call *Green Mansions,* for example, a fantastic novel.

BORGES

Well, it is.

INTERVIEWER

How would you define *fantastic* then?

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BORGES

I wonder if you *can* define it. I think it's rather an intention in a writer. I remember a very deep remark of Joseph Conrad —he is one of my favorite authors—I think it is in the foreward to something like *The Dark Line*, but it's not that...

INTERVIEWER

The Shadow Line?

BORGES

The Shadow Line. In that foreword he said that some people have thought that the story was a fantastic story because of the captain's ghost stopping the ship. He wrote—and that struck me because I write fantastic stories myself—that to deliberately write a fantastic story was not to feel that the whole universe is fantastic and mysterious; nor that it meant a lack of sensibility for a person to sit down and write something deliberately fantastic. Conrad thought that when one wrote, even in a realistic way, about the world, one was writing a fantastic story, because the world itself is fantastic and unfathomable and mysterious.

INTERVIEWER

You share this belief?

BORGES

Yes. I found that he was right. I talked to Bioy Casares, who also writes fantastic stories—very, very fine stories— and he said, "I think Conrad is right. Really, nobody knows whether the world is realistic or fantastic, that is to say, whether the world is a natural process or whether it is a kind of dream, a dream that we may or may not share with others."

INTERVIEWER

You have often collaborated with Bioy Casares, haven't you?

BORGES

Yes, I have always collaborated with him. Every night I dine at his house and then after dinner we sit down and write.

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INTERVIEWER

Would you describe your method of collaboration?

BORGES

Well, it's rather queer. When we write together, when we collaborate, we call ourselves H. Bustos Domecq. Bustos was a great-great-grandfather of mine and Domecq was a great-great-grandfather of his. Now, the queer thing is that when we write, and we write mostly humorous stuff—even if the stories are tragic, they are told in a humorous way or they are told as if the teller hardly understood what he was saying—when we write together what comes of the writing, if we are successful, and sometimes we are—why not? after all I'm speaking in the plural, no?—when our writing is successful, then what comes out is something quite different from Bioy Casares' stuff and my stuff, even the jokes are different. So we have created between us a kind of third person; we have somehow begotten a third person that is quite unlike us.

INTERVIEWER

A fantastic author?

BORGES

Yes, a fantastic author with his likes, his dislikes and a personal style that is meant to be ridiculous; but still, it is a style of his own, quite different from the kind of style I write when I try to create a ridiculous character. I think that's the only way of collaborating. Generally speaking, we go over the plot together before we set pen to paper—rather, I should talk about typewriters, because he has a typewriter. Before we begin writing, we discuss the whole story; then we go over the details, we change them, of course, we think of a beginning and then we think the beginning might be the end or that it might be more striking if somebody said nothing at all or said something quite outside the mark. Once the story is written, if you ask us whether this adjective or this particular sentence came from Bioy or from me, we can't tell.

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INTERVIEWER

It comes from the third person.

BORGES

Yes. I think that's the only way of collaborating, because I have tried collaborating with other people. Sometimes it works out all right, but sometimes one feels that the collaborator is a kind of rival. Or, if not—as in the case of Peyrou—we began collaborating but he is timid and a very courteous, a very polite kind of person, and consequently if he says anything and you make any objections, he feels hurt and he takes it back. He says: "Oh, yes, of course, of course, yes, I was quite wrong. It was a blunder." Or if you propose anything, he says: "Oh, that's wonderful!" Now that kind of thing can't be done. In the case of me and Casares, we don't feel as if we are two rivals or even as if we were two men who play chess. There's no case of winning or losing. What we're thinking of is the story itself, the stuff itself.

INTERVIEWER

I'm sorry, I'm not familiar with the second writer you named.

BORGES

Peyrou. He began by imitating Chesterton and writing stories, detective stories, not unworthy, and even worthy of Chesterton. But now he's struck a new line of novels whose aim is to show what this country was like during Perón's time and after Perón took to flight. I don't care very much for that kind of writing. I understand that his novels are fine; but, I should say, from the historical, even the journalistic point of view. When he began writing stories after Chesterton, and then he wrote some very fine stories—one of them made me cry, but of course, perhaps it made me cry because he spoke of the quarter I was bred in, Palermo, and of hoodlums of those days—a book called *La Noche Repetida*, with very, very fine stories about gangsters, hoodlums, hold-up men, that kind of thing. And all that way back, let's say, well, at the beginning of the century. Now he has started this new kind of novel wherein he wants to show what the country was like.

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INTERVIEWER

Local color, more or less?

BORGES

Local color and local politics. Then his characters are very interested, well, in graft, in loot, making money and so on. As I am less interested in those subjects, maybe it's my fault, not his, if I prefer his early stuff. But I always think of him as a great writer, an important writer, and an old friend of mine.

INTERVIEWER

You have said that your own work has moved from, in the early times, *expression*, to, in the later times, *allusion*.

BORGES

Yes.

INTERVIEWER

What do you mean by *allusion?*

BORGES

Look, I mean to say this: when I began writing, I thought that everything should be defined by the writer. For example to say "the moon" was strictly forbidden; that one had to find an adjective, an epithet for the moon. (Of course, I'm simplifying things. I know it, because many times I have written "la luna," but this is a kind of symbol of what I was doing.) Well, I thought everything had to be defined and that no common terms of phrase should be used. I would never have said "So-and-so came in and sat down," because that was far too simple and far too easy. I thought I had to find out some fancy way of saying it. Now I find out that those things are generally annoyances to the reader. But I think the whole root of the matter lies in the fact that when a writer is young he feels somehow that what he is going to say is rather silly or obvious or commonplace, and then he tries to hide it under baroque ornament, under words taken from the seventeenth-century writers; or, if not, and he sets out to be modern, then

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he does the contrary: he's inventing words all the time, or alluding to airplanes, railway trains or the telegraph and telephone because he's doing his best to be modern. Then as time goes on, one feels that one's ideas, good or bad, should be plainly expressed, because if you have an idea you must try to get that idea or that feeling or that mood into the mind of the reader. If, at the same time, you are trying to be, let's say, Sir Thomas Browne or Ezra Pound, then it can't be done. So that I think a writer always begins by being too complicated: he's playing at several games at the same time. He wants to convey a peculiar mood; at the same time he must be a contemporary and if not a contemporary, then he's a reactionary and a classic. As to the vocabulary, the first thing a young writer, at least in this country, sets out to do is to show his readers that he possesses a dictionary, that he knows all the synonyms; so we get, for example, in one line, *red*, then we get *scarlet*, then we get other different words, more or less, for the same color: *purple*.

INTERVIEWER

You've worked, then, toward a kind of classical prose?

BORGES

Yes, I do my best now. Whenever I find an out-of-the-way word, that is to say, a word that may be used by the Spanish classics or a word used in the slums of Buenos Aires, I mean a word that is different from the others, then I strike it out and I use a common word. I remember that Stevenson wrote that in a well-written page all the words should look the same way. If you write an uncouth word or an astonishing or an archaic word then the rule is broken; and what is far more important, the attention of the reader is distracted by the word. One should be able to read smoothly in it, even if you're writing metaphysics or philosophy or whatever.

INTERVIEWER

Dr. Johnson said something similar to that.

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BORGES

Yes, he must have said it; in any case, he must have agreed with that. Look, his own English was rather cumbersome, and the first thing you feel is that he is writing in a cumbersome English—that there are far too many Latin words in it—but if you reread what is written, you find that behind those involutions of phrase there is always a meaning, generally an interesting and a new meaning.

INTERVIEWER

A personal one?

BORGES

Yes, a personal one. So even though he wrote in a Latin style, I think he is the most English of writers. I think of him as—this is a blasphemy, of course, but why not be blasphemous while we're about it?—I think that Johnson was a far more English writer than Shakespeare. Because if there's one thing typical of Englishmen, it's their habit of understatement. Well, in the case of Shakespeare, there are no understatements. On the contrary, he is piling on the agonies, as I think the American said. I think Johnson, who wrote a Latin kind of English, and Wordsworth, who wrote more Saxon words, and there is a third writer whose name I can't recall—well—let's say Johnson, Wordsworth and Kipling also, I think they're far more typically English than Shakespeare. I don't know why, but I always feel something Italian, something Jewish about Shakespeare, and perhaps Englishmen admire him because of that, because it's so unlike them.

INTERVIEWER

And why the French dislike him, to the extent that they do; because he's so bombastic.

BORGES

He *was* very bombastic. I remember I saw a film some days ago—not too good a film—called *Darling*. There some verses of Shakespeare are quoted. Now those verses are always bet-

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ter when they are quoted, because he is defining England and he calls it, for example, "This other Eden, demi-paradise... This precious stone set in the silver sea" and so on and in the end he says something like, "this realm, this England." Now when that quotation is made the reader stops there, but in the text I think the verses go on so that the whole point is lost. The real point would have been the idea of a man trying to define England, loving her very much and finding at the end that the only thing he can do is to say "England" outright—as if you said "America." But if he says "this realm, this land, this England," and then goes on "this demi-paradise" and so on, the whole point is lost, because *England* should be the last word. Well, I suppose Shakespeare always wrote in a hurry, as the player said to Ben Jonson, and so be it. You've no time to feel that that would have been the last word, the word England, summing up and blotting out all the others, saying: "Well, I've been attempting something that is impossible." But he went on with it, with his metaphors and his bombast, because he was bombastic. Even in such a famous phrase as Hamlet's last words, I think: "The rest is silence." There is something phony about it; it's meant to impress. I don't think anybody would say anything like that.

INTERVIEWER

In the context of the play, my favorite line in *Hamlet* occurs just after Claudius' praying scene when Hamlet enters his mother's chamber and says: "Now, Mother, what's the matter?"

BORGES

"What's the matter?" is the opposite of "The rest is silence." At least for me, "The rest is silence" has a hollow ring about it. One feels that Shakespeare is thinking: "Well, now Prince Hamlet of Denmark is dying: he must say something impressive." So he ekes out that phrase "The rest is silence." Now that may be impressive, but it is not true! He was working away at his job of poet and not thinking of the real character, of Hamlet the Dane.

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INTERVIEWER

When you are working, what kind of reader do you imagine you are writing for, if you do imagine it? Who would be your ideal audience?

BORGES

Perhaps a few personal friends of mine. Not myself because I never reread what I've written. I'm far too afraid to feel ashamed of what I've done.

INTERVIEWER

Do you expect the many people who read your work to catch the allusions and references?

BORGES

No. Most of those allusions and references are merely put there as a kind of private joke.

INTERVIEWER

A *private* joke?

BORGES

A joke not to be shared with other people. I mean, if they share it, all the better; but if they don't, I don't care a hang about it.

INTERVIEWER

Then it's the opposite approach to allusion from, say, Eliot in *The Waste Land*.

BORGES

I think that Eliot and Joyce wanted their readers to be rather mystified and so to be worrying out the sense of what they had done.

INTERVIEWER

You seem to have read as much, if not more, non-fiction or factual material as fiction and poetry. Is that true? For example, you apparently like to read encyclopedias.

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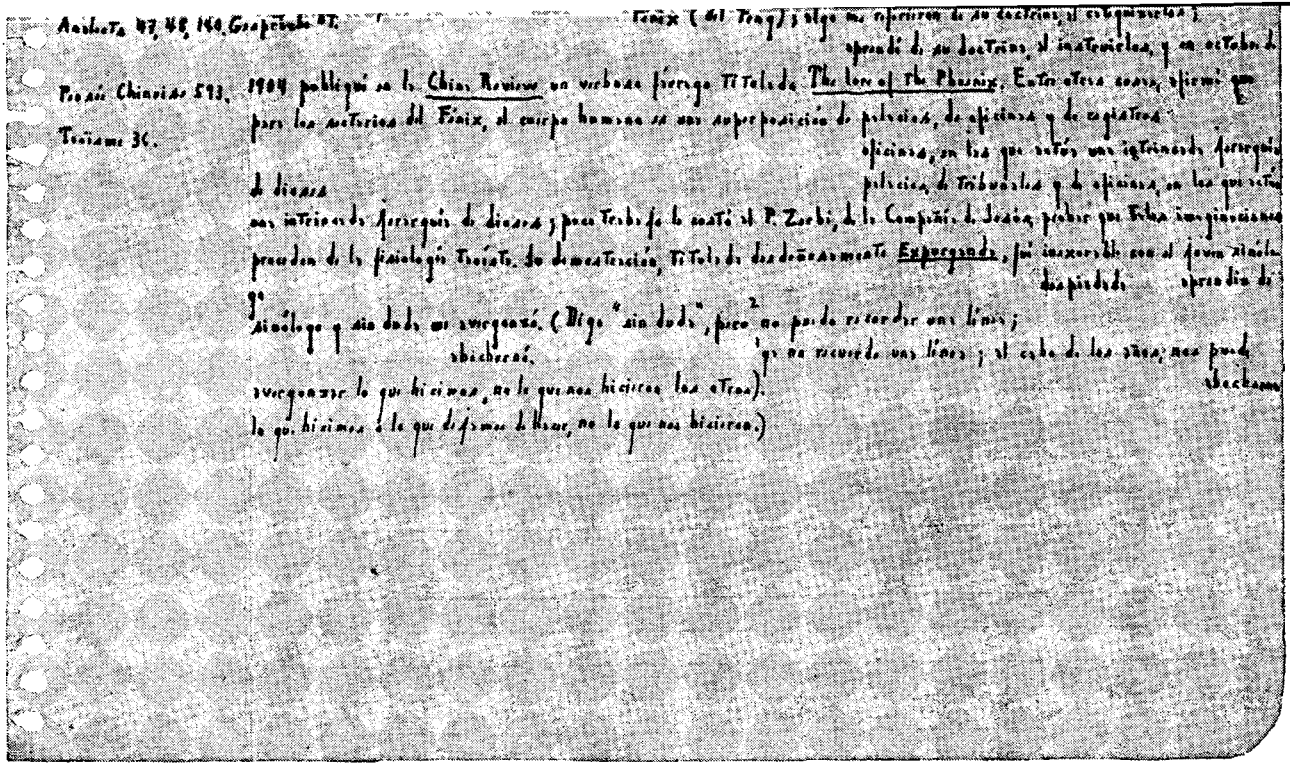
Hackmann III 1, Rhgo. En la China, profesar una de las Tres religiones no es excluir las restantes;
Davids 19. determinada se no es excluir las otras; cada una es concebida como una magia o como una
Chinesen Studie II 162 sistema de magia, y la busca del elixir de inmortalidad no es incompatible con la del incorruptible Nirvana. Consecuencia
E. Br. VI, 176. hizo que predicase en esta provincia la religión de Jesús
y más, hizo que predicase el evangelio de Jesús y lograse proselitos
Orientalische Religionen 165, 166, Glasenapp I 164. Theotoms 128. ganar proselitos es fácil; lo difícil es incalcarles que no deben seguir adorando
al Cielo esférico y la Tierra cuadrangular, a el Rey del Tao, que puede transformarse en nueve hombres.
impedir que sigan adorando al Cielo hemisférico y la Tierra cuadrangular, a el Rey del Tao, que puede convertirse en nueve hombres, i Cuántos piadosos estudiosos
pilares de la Iglesia
Glasenapp I 220. Mutadiatis en Shanghai son miembros de la secta del Loto Blanco o
afiliados de la Flor de Dragón o del Loto Blanco!
procuran igualmente los conciliábulos de la Flor de Dragón! Aplicar la mutadiatis a esa moda es co-
sas no se
me aplicarla a las ánimas;
nas vamos que aplicarla a las ánimas; nadie podrá saber el preciso número de budistas que hay en el Imperio Central. Tampoco
el preciso número de individuos de la secta del Fénix.
Hoy mismo
oriendo el Baton Rouge: a principios de 1892 la Iglesia Episcopal



A manuscript page concerning "Sect of the Phoenix" with sources listed in the margin and indented revisions (actual size).

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BORGES

Ah, yes. I'm very fond of that. I remember a time when I used to come here to read. I was a very young man, and I was far too timid to ask for a book. Then, I was rather, I won't say poor, but I wasn't too wealthy in those days—so I used to come every night here and pick out a volume of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the old edition.

INTERVIEWER

The eleventh?

BORGES

The eleventh or twelfth because those editions are far above the new ones. They were meant to be *read*. Now they are merely reference books. While in the eleventh or twelfth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, you had long articles by Macaulay, by Coleridge; no, not by Coleridge by...

INTERVIEWER

By De Quincey?

BORGES

Yes, by De Quincey and so on. So that I used to take any volume from the shelves—there was no need to ask for them: they were reference books—and then I opened the book till I found an article that interested me, for example about the Mormons or about any particular writer. I sat down and read it because those articles were really monographs, really books or short books. The same goes for the German encyclopedias—Brockhaus or Meyers. When we got the new copy, I thought that was what they call the *Shorter Brockhaus*, but it wasn't. It was explained to me that because people live in small flats, there is no longer room for books in thirty volumes. Encyclopedias have suffered greatly; they have been packed in.

SUSANA QUINTEROS *(Interrupting)*

I'm sorry. *Está esperando el Señor Campbell.*

BORGES

Ah, please ask him to wait just a moment more. Those Campbells keep coming.

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INTERVIEWER

May I ask just a few more questions?

BORGES

Yes, please, of course.

INTERVIEWER

Some readers have found that your stories are cold, impersonal, rather like some of the newer French writers. Is that your intention?

BORGES

No. *(Sadly)* If that has happened, it is out of mere clumsiness. Because I have felt them very deeply. I have felt them so deeply that I have told them, well, using strange symbols so that people might not find out that they were all more or less autobiographical. The stories were about myself, my personal experiences. I suppose it's the English diffidence, no?

INTERVIEWER

Then a book like the little volume called *Everness* would be a good book for someone to read about your work?

BORGES

I think it is. Besides the lady who wrote it is a close friend of mine. I found that word in *Roget's Thesaurus*. Then I thought that word was invented by Bishop Wilkins, who invented an artificial language.

INTERVIEWER

You're written about that.

BORGES

Yes, I wrote about Wilkins. But he also invented a wonderful word that strangely enough has never been used by English poets—an awful word really, a terrible word. *Everness*, of course, is better than *eternity* because *eternity* is rather worn now. *Ever-r-rness* is far better than the German *Ewigkeit*, the

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same word. But he also created a beautiful word, a word that's a poem in itself, full of hopelessness, sadness and despair: the word *neverness*. A beautiful word, no? He invented it, and I don't know why the poets left it lying about and never used it.

INTERVIEWER

Have you used it?

BORGES

No, no never. I used *everness* but *neverness* is very beautiful. There is something hopeless about it, no? And there is no word with the same meaning in any other language, or in English. You might say *impossibility*, but that's very tame for *neverness:* the Saxon ending in *-ness*. *Neverness*. Keats uses *nothingness:* "Till world and fame to nothingness do sink;" but *nothingness*, I think, is weaker than *neverness*. You have in Spanish *nadería*—many similar words—but nothing like *neverness*. So if you're a poet, you should use that word. It's a pity for that word to be lost in the pages of a dictionary. I don't think it's ever been used. It may have been used by some theologian; it might. I suppose Jonathan Edwards would have enjoyed that kind of word or Sir Thomas Browne perhaps, and Shakespeare, of course, because he was very fond of words.

INTERVIEWER

You respond to English so well, you love it so much, how is it you have written so little in English?

BORGES

Why? Why, I'm afraid. Fear. But next year, those lectures of mine that I shall deliver, I'll write them in English. I already wrote to Harvard.

INTERVIEWER

You're coming to Harvard next year?

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BORGES

Yes. I'm going to deliver a course of lectures on poetry. And as I think that poetry is more or less untranslatable, and as I think English literature—and that includes America—is by far the richest in the world, I will take most, if not all of my examples, from English poetry. Of course, as I have my hobby, I'll try to work in some Old English verses but that's English also! In fact, according to some of my students, it's far more English than Chaucer's English!

INTERVIEWER

To get back to your own work for a moment: I have often wondered how you go about arranging works in those collections. Obviously the principle is not chronological. Is it similarity of theme?

BORGES

No, not chronology; but sometimes I find out that I've written the same parable or story twice over or that two different stories carry the same meaning, and so I try to put them alongside each other. That's the only principle. Because, for example, once it happened to me to write a poem, a not too good poem, and then to rewrite it many years afterwards. After the poem was written, some of my friends told me: "Well, that's the same poem you published some five years ago." And I said: "Well, so it is!" But I hadn't the faintest notion that it was. After all, I think that a poet has maybe five or six poems to write and not more than that. He's trying his hand at rewriting them from different angles and perhaps with different plots and in different ages and different characters, but the poems are essentially and innerly the same.

INTERVIEWER

You have written many reviews and journal articles.

BORGES

Well, I had to do it.

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INTERVIEWER

Did you choose the books you wanted to review?

BORGES

Yes, I generally did.

INTERVIEWER

So the choice does express your own tastes?

BORGES

Oh yes, yes. For example, when somebody told me to write a review of a certain *History of Literature*, I found there were so many howlers and blunders, and as I greatly admire the author as a poet, I said: "No, I don't want to write about it, because if I write about it I shall write against it." I don't like to attack people, especially now—when I was a young man, yes, I was very fond of it—but as time goes on, one finds that it is no good. When people write in favor or against anybody that hardly helps or hurts them. I think that a man can be helped, well, the man can be done or undone by his *own* writing, not by what other people say of him, so that even if you brag a lot and people say that you are a genius—well, you'll be found out.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have any particular method for the naming of your characters?

BORGES

I have two methods: one of them is to work in the names of my grandfathers, great-grandfathers, and so on. To give them a kind of, well, I won't say immortality, but that's one of the methods. The other is to use names that somehow strike me. For example, in a story of mine, one of the characters who comes and goes is called Yarmolinsky because the name struck me—it's a strange word, no? Then another character is called Red Scharlach because Scharlach means *scarlet* in German and he was a murderer; he was doubly red, no? Red Scharlach: Red Scarlet.

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INTERVIEWER

What about the Princess with the beautiful name who occurs in two of your stories?

BORGES

Faucigny Lucinge? Well, she's a great friend of mine. She's an Argentine lady. She married a French prince and as the name is very beautiful, as most French titles are, especially if you cut out the Faucigny, as she does. She calls herself La Princesse de Lucinge. It's a beautiful word.

INTERVIEWER

What about Tlön and Uqbar?

BORGES

Oh, well, those are merely meant to be uncouth. So *u-q-b-a-r*.

INTERVIEWER

Unpronounceable in a way?

BORGES

Yes, more or less unpronounceable, and then *Tlön: t-l* is rather an uncommon combination, no? Then *ö*. The Latin *Orbis Tertius*—one can say that swimmingly, no? Perhaps in *Tlön* I may have been thinking of *traum*, the same word as the English *dream*. But then it would have to be *Tröme*, but *Tröme* might remind the reader of a railway train: *t-l* was a queerer combination. I thought I had invented a word for imagined objects called *hrön*. Yet when I began learning Old English, I found that *hron* was one of the words for whale. There were two words, *wael* and *hron*, so the *hronrad* is the "whale road," that is to say "the sea" in Old English poetry.

INTERVIEWER

Then the word you invented to describe an object perpetrated on reality by the imagination, that word had already been invented and was, in fact, a *hrön?*

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BORGES

Yes, yes, it came to me. I would like to think that it came from my ancestors of ten centuries ago—that's a probable explanation, no?

INTERVIEWER

Would you say that in your stories you have tried to hybridize the short story and the essay?

BORGES

Yes—but I have done that on purpose. The first to point that out to me was Casares. He said that I had written short stories that were really sort of half-way houses between an essay and a story.

INTERVIEWER

Was that partly to compensate for your timidity about writing narratives?

BORGES

Yes, it may have been. Yes; because nowadays, or at least today, I began writing that series of stories about hoodlums of Buenos Aires: those are straightforward stories. There is nothing of the essay about them or even of poetry. The story is told in a straightforward way and those stories are in a sense sad, perhaps horrible. They are always understated. They are told by people who are also hoodlums and you can hardly understand them. They may be tragedies but the tragedy is not felt by them. They merely tell the story and the reader is, I suppose, made to feel that the story goes deeper than the story itself. Nothing is said of the sentiments of the characters—I got that out of the Old Norse saga—the idea that one should know a character by his words and by his deeds, but that one shouldn't get inside his skull and say what he was thinking.

INTERVIEWER

So they are non-psychological rather than impersonal?

BORGES

Yes, but there is a hidden psychology behind the story, because if not the characters would be mere puppets.

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INTERVIEWER

What about the Kabbalah? When did you first get interested in that?

BORGES

I think it was through De Quincey, through his idea that the whole world was a set of symbols or that everything meant something else. Then when I lived in Geneva, I had two personal, two great friends—Maurice Abramowicz and Seymour Jichlinski—their names tell you the stock they sprang from: they were Polish Jews. I greatly admired Switzerland and the nation itself, not merely the scenery and the towns; but the Swiss are very stand-offish; one can hardly have a Swiss friend, because as they have to live on foreigners, I suppose they dislike them. That would be the same case with the Mexicans. They chiefly live on Americans, on American tourists, and I don't think anybody likes to be a hotel keeper, even though there's nothing dishonorable about it. But if you are a hotel keeper, if you have to entertain many people from other countries, well, you feel that they are different from you and you may dislike them in the long run.

INTERVIEWER

Have you tried to make your own stories Kabbalistic?

BORGES

Yes, sometimes I have.

INTERVIEWER

Using traditional Kabbalistic interpretations?

BORGES

No. I read a book called *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism.*

INTERVIEWER

The one by Scholem?

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BORGES

Yes, by Scholem and another book by Trachtenberg on Jewish superstitions. Then I have read all the books of the Kabbalah I have found and all the articles in the encyclopedias and so on. But I have no Hebrew whatever. I may have Jewish ancestors, but I can't tell. My mother's name is Acevedo: Acevedo may be a name for a Portuguese Jew, but again, it may not. Now if you're called Abraham, I think there is no doubt whatever about it, but as the Jews took Italian, Spanish, Portuguese names, it does not necessarily follow that if you have one of those names you come from Jewish stock. The word *acevedo*, of course, means a kind of tree; the word is not especially Jewish, though many Jews are called Acevedo. I can't tell. I wish I had some Jewish forefathers.

INTERVIEWER

You once wrote that all men are either Platonists or Aristotelians.

BORGES

I didn't say that. Coleridge said it.

INTERVIEWER

But you quoted him.

BORGES

Yes, I quoted him.

INTERVIEWER

And which are you?

BORGES

I think I'm Aristotelian, but I wish it were the other way. I think it's the English strain that makes me think of particular things and persons being real rather than general ideas being real. But I'm afraid now that the Campbells are coming.

INTERVIEWER

Before I go would you mind signing my copy of *Labyrinths?*

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BORGES

I'll be glad to. Ah yes, I know this book. There's my picture —but do I really look like that? I don't like that picture. I'm not so gloomy? so beaten down?

INTERVIEWER

Don't you think it looks pensive?

BORGES

Perhaps. But so dark? so heavy? The brow... oh well.

INTERVIEWER

Do you like this edition of your writings?

BORGES

A good translation, no? Except that there are too many Latin words in it. For example, if I wrote, just say, *habitación oscura* (I wouldn't, of course, have written *that*, but *cuarto oscuro*, but just say that I did), then the temptation is to translate *habitación* with *habitation*, a word which sounds close to the original. But the word I want is *room:* it is more definite, simpler, better. You know, English is a beautiful language, but the older languages are even more beautiful: they had *vowels*. Vowels in modern English have lost their value, their color. My hope for English—for the English language—is America. Americans speak clearly. When I go to the movies now, I can't see much, but in the American movies, I understand every word. In the English movies I can't understand as well. Do you ever find it so?

INTERVIEWER

Sometimes, particularly in comedies. The English actors seem to speak too fast.

BORGES

Exactly! Exactly. Too fast with too little emphasis. They blur the words, the sounds. A fast blur. No, America must save the language; and, do you know, I think the same is true

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for Spanish? I prefer South American speech. I always have.

I suppose you in America don't read Ring Lardner or Bret Harte much any more?

INTERVIEWER

They are read, but mostly in the secondary schools.

BORGES

What about O. Henry?

INTERVIEWER

Again, mostly in the schools.

BORGES

And I suppose there mostly for the technique, the surprise ending. I don't like that trick do you? Oh, it's all right in theory; in practice, that's something else. You can read them only once if there is just the surprise. You remember what Swift said: "the art of sinking." Now in the detective story, that's different. The surprise is there too, but there are also the characters, the scene or the landscape to satisfy us. But now I remember that the Campbells are coming, the Campbells are coming. They are supposed to be a ferocious tribe. Where are they?

—RONALD CHRIST

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a man stands
on his
head one
minute—

then he
sit
down all
different

—ARAM SAROYAN

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Dreaming Over a Page

This field they've contracted
us to separate from its surroundings
I've stayed in bed watching as the
moon above it turns
its globes of earth with spit on every glacier
into landmarks hostile to language
spoken by tyrants
someone is looking over your shoulder as
you write in bed the window
holds a page of commentaries you guide
this pearl into the horizon then close your eyes

Simply filled with love their power
to be crass
you find yourself heading away from the park
down a path she is in the throes
of executing another assignment
the way it occurs and the publicity surrounding it
you think the glass burrows in
the sidewalk and are used
by the feelings that pass at great speed
a prude's entrance in the bar using
the language of the normal
spirit that the excellence of her modesty awards

Blocked by this person
we are heavier than grains locked
in a pearl stretched by rollers
tinting the sidewalk the laced boot
walks on scratching it out like the tip of a heel
among bruises from which you smile
the pathos culled remains linear
in its singlemindedness rebels and pushes
the curls aside
with the brute strength from her forehead
when she is too gentle not to adorn herself she
stares downward and the even cracks
in the restroom she prepares to enter

—LEWIS WARSH

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Bleep

Somewhere (where) in between say
Index and middle fingers, to one day
Wake up and find growing a new rather
Radish vestigial finger
Little do you know little do you too know
Questions. Eyes picking off barrages of mirages soberly.
Lone. Drinking on an empty beach. Sauterne
Bottle overturned. Sand thru sievey fingers,
Listen to prokprok of waves
Fearing too many great many great
Thinkers and thinkers of our time
Busy themselves, usefully. Seeing sprockets as the real
Real. (And all *that* entails.
Spend time dubbing in historical consciousness,
Makes the heart grow blonder with the distance.
Waterproofs hair. Air.
Fingernails grow whatever way you wish
Sunny nostalgia the way wishes grow,
Whicheverway, are more close to
OBJECTIVE vestments searched for where
Disguised as rockets
One's free to choose between limits
Between sign that YIELD
Either a b c d e or
Any other squint or
Sequence found squeezing the fingers. Eh, graft. Being
Not so much a question of question or of answer,
Swallowed with unicap and orange juice, but of right
Detachment from the lips
Alphabetically precipitate, that really brings out
Evening crickets bats the real you eating bubbles
Every and each night of the week, depends
Combining sequence with each (vague) COUNT.
Always hoped for sixth toe on either foot.
Merely sonar, an indication you're not alone
And someone somewhere cares for you.
Detailly, even if vaguely. Please, to mow the maudlin.

—TED GREENWALD

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A Summer Evening's Wake

M. E. White

From far down the long, flat road the bus comes. "Wichita" it says in white letters, and it has come from Denver, from Salt Lake, from San Francisco, and the girl, Lee, has come just that far herself, riding two days and nights out to this western Kansas prairie to see her grandfather for the last time. He is an old man now, no longer the hard old dandy who panned gold in Alaska, but a frail and slightly senile version of that self, and this vacation she senses somehow will mark their last visit. All evening her mind has dwelled on death while her hands folded and unfolded her grandfather's last letter. But now, exhausted of tears and feeling, she only stares vacantly out the window. There the moon shines full, and it is a nice night, a summer night, where the air hovers still, and the dark is only a soft haze above and beyond the moon as though it were not really night at all, but the day fixed in a soundless, empty eternity.

In town the streets are empty, the lights off, and the bus slows down, then turns to bump up Main Street and stop before the old hotel. Lee is the only one to get off here. The bus driver waits for her to get her suitcase from the rack, waits for her to walk back to the open door and climb down, then starts on immediately. For just a minute Lee stands before the darkened lobby watching as the bus turns the corner at Alma Shirley's front porch beauty parlor, then she turns too and starts up the Main Street hill, the hill that Dawson rode. Dawson, even in his last letter, her grandfather retells that same tale, a tale that he has repeated over and over again with increasing originality. Stopping now to look back towards the one-block business district, Lee pulls the letter from her pocket once more and rereads this newest and most erratic version of the tale:

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"Dawson. Dawson, he wouldn't kill anybody. No one ever saw him handle a gun, didn't know anything about it, but he carried one just the same. Then, one day, out in front of the hotel, here comes Dawson hunched over like a racerider on this old sorrel—except Dawson's so damn big he looks more like a bear on a merry-go-round. The horse is rearing its neck, and its eyes are going both ways at once it's trying so hard to see back over its shoulder. Almost seems that that sorrel is going to turn itself inside out. But Dawson just yanks the neck up more and more until that sorrel looks like a merry-go-round horse itself with a neck so stiff back that you could swear there was a pole through it, a canopy on top, and a turntable below. Then you could see what he was after—a kid, who is just watching him there, not doing anything, just watching as though it were a show or a parade and were going to go right on past, but waiting for a spectacle just the same, or a disaster maybe, ready to pick up the pieces as souvenirs, crowding Dawson just a little.

"Now Dawson slows down, almost halts, but doesn't, and that sorrel is foaming at the mouth with its neck cricked at right angles and its eyes rolling as though they were loose in its head and would fall out if its neck weren't held back so tightly. The foam is running down the arch of its throat and its forelegs in two fine streams, and then, stopped there, Dawson shoots. Bang. Just shoots the kid straight through the head before anyone could have foretold it or why, and the kid just crumples soundlessly, slides down the side of the old courthouse, and Dawson, he rides off up Main Street and the hill, past the old granaries there, never to be seen again.

"No one knew that kid. Some Indian kid—one of the ten little. Don't know which one. He didn't do anything—just died. Kerbang, there."

All the letters are like that now—some written on cigarette papers, some on the labels off of canned tomato juice. This one is written in the margins of some old gold mining stock, something in which her grandfather had happily lost all his money. He is not well at all. Brushing away a last tear, Lee refolds the letter and puts it back in her pocket, then she starts

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up the hill again. At the top, she sets the suitcase down and changes hands, then she turns the corner and starts down towards the old gray stucco bungalow. In a minute she is under the cottonwood tree at the side of the house.

The boy who takes care of her grandparents sleeps in the basement where the cool, damp air smells of the canned goods that line the walls. Picking her way across the grass to his window, Lee taps on the inside screen. "Roy," she calls softly, and there is a low moan from inside. "Roy," she calls again, and this time the light is turned on and the boy stares sleepily up at her, his face meshed by the screen. "It's Lee; open the door."

Grunting a sign of recognition, the boy starts out of the room, and she hears him click on another light and then climb the stairs. Lee goes around to the front porch.

Yawning, the boy unlatches the screen. It is three A.M., and the sound of footsteps can be heard coming down the steps from the upstairs bedroom where her grandfather sleeps. Even though he no longer farms, his hours are habitually those of the rest of the community—still, three is too early, and he has been awakened. He appears, sleepy, but dressed, for he has been wearing his clothes to bed this past year, forgetting now, forgetting more and more.

"Who's there?" he calls and advances into the dining room, wobbly-kneed, dressed as always in boots, string tie, and a pearl-buttoned shirt that hangs out over his pants. His hair is still thick and black, and, from a distance and in the pale shadow of the porch light that shines through the living room and into the dining room alcove, he looks much younger than he is. "Who's there?" he repeats.

"It's Lee."

"Who?"

"Lee."

The boy yawns.

"Lee," she says again. Still she can see that he does not recognize her. He continues to stare. And now, under the thick, dark hair, she sees the veins and crinkled skin that expose old age. He waits for her to explain more than her

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name, but she can not say that she has come to see him for the last time. She can not say that; so she slumps silently into the overstuffed chair with its dirty, white muslin slipcover and waits.

2

At three-thirty they are still sitting there in the shadows of the living room. Now the grandmother has joined them and sits gathering a fuschia-flowered housecoat about her. "Pop, you remember Lee," she chides.

"Nope," the old man says. "Some girl of this boy and I won't have it in my own house."

"Now Pop," the grandmother says.

"Not as long as I'm alive," he says. "When I'm dead, you can open the place up to tramps and camp followers for all I care, but not while I'm still here, and here I am."

"Now Pop," the grandmother chides again in the voice of one who views with adoration its child's mistakes. "Lee's come all this way. From San Francisco."

"Don't matter where she come from. Locale's no excuse."

"She's your own granddaughter."

"Never saw her before in my life, but I remember one like her in Alaska."

"Well, we're glad you could come, dear," her grandmother says as though that somehow sums up the conversation.

"Shot herself through the left ear," the old man continues, uninterrupted. "She was all right until then—then she died. Name was Klondike; I remember that, too; in fact, they were all named Klondike—Klondike One through Six. Can't remember which Klondike it was that shot herself through the ear though. Might have been One or Three. Two went snowblind. Didn't matter much."

The boy lies with his head back against a crocheted anti-macassar and snores soundlessly with his mouth open. Every time a break in the conversation stirs him, his Adam's apple jerks spasmodically. The old man sits in the wooden rocking chair with its leather-cushioned back and seat; as he rocks,

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he nods his head to himself in a kind of personal agreement.

"Guess it must have been Klondike One," he says finally. "It was one of those pitch black days when a clock might as well go backwards as forwards for all the difference it made, and Dawson, an old weasel of a man with one front tooth that pronged forward until he looked like a hairlip with a perpetual cigarette butt stuck in his mouth, was just coming into town to gamble."

Not listening, the grandmother stares in rapt bemusement at the rug.

"He could gamble all day and still stay even; he never won much, but he never lost any. That day things flip-flopped like so many trained seals, and Dawson walks away from a table with enough money to take him around the world and back the other way. Then, he announces, casually, that he and Klondike One are eloping to Hawaii. 'Oh, a little brown girl in a little grass shack in Keala Kekua,' he says to us as Klondike, wearing a lei of rabbits' feet and something that would have passed for a grass skirt if it hadn't looked more like shredded green felt from one of the pool tables, walks in. Half-way into the room, she holds up a gun and shoots herself through the ear. Bang. 'Well, back to the reservation,' Dawson says."

The grandfather smiles, rocks back and forth, sings, "One little, two little, three little Indians."

3

At four there are a few minutes of silence broken only by a hiccoughing snore from the boy who issues sounds from his wide-open mouth and then smacks his lips around them. In the silence, Lee thinks she can hear her heart beat, but that sound, like the sound of the crickets, becomes faint from listening to it, and, in a while, the beat in her wrists is only a mock sensation as her entire arm stings, grows numb, and lingers precariously on the pinpoint of feeling.

The grandfather continues to sing and rock. "A little dead girl in a little felt shack in Keala Kekua. Bang."

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Displaying a mild amount of energy, the grandmother gets up and says, "Maybe you'd like a fried egg." Then she sits back down. "Well, if you get hungry, just hunt around in the kitchen till you find something. Seems to me there might be some cold chicken too."

"Keala kerbang Kekua kerbang."

Lee doesn't move but nods in recognition of the offer. She is idly twisting the ring on her little finger. Made from gold her grandfather panned, it is a child's ring, given to her when she was seven, and too small now even for her little finger, but she wears it and lets it cut into the finger until it is almost embedded there, saving it like the letter; for Lee is one of those who carefully culls the intransitory from the transitory, a collector of life's every memento and trinket. At seven she already had quite a collection of bones, and her mind wanders now to that private child's graveyard of dead birds, cats, four chickens—dyed red and blue for Easter—and the remains of a little black lamb run over by a neighbor's tractor.

"Bing-bang."

Out past Shetler's camp town and the sand hills, down by the edge of the river, she buried them all in empty coffee cans.

"What did you say your name was?" the grandfather asks.

"Lee," she answers, still staring down at the little ring, the flesh around it is green.

"Minced ham," says the grandmother, matter-of-factly reciting the icebox's interior.

"Sweet Leelani."

As she twists the ring around again, it pinches, and, in the suddenly silent room, she lets out a short gasp of pain, then is silent once more; her finger is numb.

4

The noise wakes the boy, who, for a minute, looks as though he doesn't know where he is and then, more exactly, as though he does but wishes he didn't. "Well, I think I'll go back to bed," he says. No one else moves at this suggestion, but they all watch as he goes out through the dining room and

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then the kitchen, and then listen as his footsteps descend into the basement. Silence. It is now four-thirty.

"Look like your mother," the grandfather says. "What's her name?"

"Now Pop."

"Well, it's been nice visiting with you," the grandfather concludes. "Stop in again some time." Lee does not move, and he eyes her suitcase and adds, "All packed up to go some place, aren't you?"

"And what have you been doing in school this year?" the grandmother politely inquires.

"You're not on your way to Hawaii, are you?"

"No."

"No, and I say it wouldn't matter much." He rocks back and then wedges his heels under the rocker until he remains suspended backwards, his head hanging back into the dining room alcove staring up at the ceiling. "Nope," he says. "Did I ever tell you about Dawson. Well, he was old and frail, and so anemic he could hardly hold up a gun. He was a light blue color most of the time except when he got scared and then he turned so white you could see every vein in his body like he was knit together, and, if he got really scared, he began to twitch one way or another until you could have sworn he was going to unravel.

"Almost everything scared that man, and, if he didn't already have a superstition to fit a situation, he made up one that would. He never went anywhere without counting off the people along the way in groups of ten. Didn't come out even, he'd go back home. He never drank beer without spilling some on the floor first and saying, "After you." He didn't play poker much, but, when he did, he introduced himself to all the face cards. And every time he crossed a bridge he talked to it as though it were just holding him up because they were such good friends.

"Now one day, about the middle of the afternoon, Dawson comes riding into town looking like a little blue string tied onto a gun. Then, after excusing himself for bothering the door, gun in hand, he walks into Barney's where Hilo and her

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Hawaiian Roundup are playing. He keeps telling the gun that he doesn't want to pinch it, but that he may have to. No one pays much attention to him standing there, just twitching himself into a tangle, until Hilo comes up, and he shoots her through the ear. Kerbang."

5

At five, only the grandmother and the girl sit there, and without talking as if each is listening to the silent conversation of the other. The grandfather has gone back upstairs. They have heard him climb the steps, but now it is silent, as silent above as below. Then they hear his steps return, descending into the quiet one by one. He has on his hat, a Stetson, it is pushed far back on his forehead, and, strapped around him, is the heavy silver-buckled gun belt and the gun. It is the costume that he wore in the Kansas Day parade last year, when unsteady and slightly drunk, but refusing to be left out of the procession, he had been tied onto an old mare. He had ridden up and down Main Street from the court house to the fair grounds, and, when the parade was over, they had to send someone out after him, for he refused to stop parading and continued to ride back and forth, still waving his hat in the air and shouting, "I'm a sunflower in a sunflower state."

Now, he twirls his gun, stops, cocks it, and shoots the grandmother and then the girl before either realizes, moves, or even screams. Downstairs, there is the sound of running. The footsteps can be heard coming up the stairs, rapidly at first, and then they squeak nervously in sudden hesitation on a noisy step. After that there is only the quiet rustle of someone tiptoeing through the kitchen.

Pausing, the boy waits before looking through the kitchen door, and listens to the grandfather waiting and listening on the other side. Then, white-faced, and frozen-lipped, he steps out of the darkness into the frame of the doorway, and the grandfather shoots once more.

Outside, the moon's light extends itself further and further across the horizon until it is almost the flaming base of dawn, and then it is morning.

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Jon Cott

Swimming

"Look, my legs," you point after lying on the rocks.
By your toes, water is light yellow
like the most beautiful mouth wash.
The middle to the distance is green and maroon.
But the yellow, turning over and melting,
is the way you leave me,
a way like my saying
I like to sleep with you but I'd like to sleep with her,
always ones I've slept with—
not what you'd call getting it out of the system,
not what would hold wishes still like magic fingers.

The teeth of the spirit
shape St Andrew's Crosses on your legs.
Sometimes in the sea, leaving half my body free,
my penis and legs weigh nothing,
the water disappears.
In student or summer towns
embraces pull and dissolve
until the sky forms edges of white walls,
angular like Greek letters.

This is timed for saying goodbye to you
where my body is one place,
naked as if a sheet were pulled round me,
as when my brother and I lay together
in the corner of a porch
walled in by mosquito netting.
All night we listened to cicadas,
in the morning smelling dust and honey.
We gave up going swimming that summer,
just to stay there.

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Ted Hughes

Public Bar T.V.

That glass, bubble-bodied, dream-foetus of shadow-pallor,
Which will never enter life,
Looms like the negative
Of a clumsy, weary and ageing man's failure.

Men that have been bending all their lives
In the one dim lamp of a pension
To lift their needs, relax as in graves,
Lifeless but for the eye-gleams of attention.

They haze and sip, like a mountain-range in the dew.
These are the Giant Stupids.
They are grimy to the spinal fluid
As if they slept nightly in the earth.

Mankind floats up the air in a peephole cloud—
That's moonland!
They can't comprehend. They undergo it like death.
They swallow all its drizzling nothings, like the mild earth.

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The Toughest

I

The eye was a masterful horseman
Hardened, proud and fierce.
He reined in the listening tremors of the earth,
He spurred its humped blindness.

But the sky-collapse of lightning
The earth flopping in violet like a fish jerked from its element
Drove the eye squirming into the skull—

It survived
Where a church-tower did not.

They eye reappeared, close to orange lichens.

While the ears ranged far off
Where the laughter of great outer darkness threatened to close its teeth
on the skull
And the mouth chewed lumps of sun that were melting the brains.

II

To be sober in sober company, with the water in the cup
And the great seas negotiating their statuary confines,
The lucid moon, and the Great Outer Darkness

Which is the same as the small inner darkness

After huge weepings
And vanishing of islands
To watch

Because nothing else can watch

Leading
A ghost
Of query, alone, to a

Doubtful haunting—

Reading the empty chart that the stars are
Under the hopeful light of the leaf

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Differences

Carolyn Gaiser

The next morning it was cold in the apartment. She sat on the edge of the bed, wrapped in an old plaid bathrobe and warmed her clothes over the electric heater. He was still asleep. Without his glasses, he seemed accessible, someone who could be talked to with understanding, without self-consciousness: his hair curling up into funny ringlets and the lines of his profile imprinting on the air a certain naive justice. A large suitcase lay open on the floor, overflowing with sweaters and socks. She wondered if anyone wore socks in Israel. Probably not.

She was leaning over, a frayed slip dangling from her hands, when he said, "What in Christ's name do you think you're doing?"

"I was just trying to—who'd ever think Rome would get this cold. You know there's something sort of ungraceful about clothes when you're not wearing them? I mean all the straps and hooks and things, they're ungraceful."

That wasn't at all what she meant but she knew it was useless to pursue any discussion that even hinted at the possibility of becoming personal.

"I'm hungry," she said, feeling hunger somehow a safe and noncommittal state of being.

"So am I. We'll go out to eat, all right?"

He got up then and walked into the other room, leaving her alone to adjust to her ungraceful clothes as best she could. She dressed hurriedly, buttoning up the blue woolen suit she had worn the night before and ran to the mirror in the bathroom, hoping that some miraculous transformation might have taken place. It hadn't. She continued to look not the least bit Slavic, eastern European or even faintly Semitic. She

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was combing her ordinary-colored hair when he came back, dressed with his usual care, the inevitable corduroy vest, the gray suit he'd had made by a Roman tailor. He had his glasses on and also his air of inviolability. She turned away from the mirror.

"Do I look awful?"

"No, of course not. Come on, let's get going. I've got a lot of things to do today."

She followed him into the living room that also served as his studio. It smelled of turpentine and burnt sienna. One of his paintings was standing on the easel, huge and dark with many edges separating, dividing, crossing each other. He had a flair for edges.

She noticed a new book lying on the table next to *Goodbye Columbus* and *Act One—A History of the Italian Jews*. She decided not to mention it and concentrated on putting on her gloves, an apologetic birthday present he'd given her. All his kindnesses were apologies though she could never discover exactly what he was apologizing for.

"Have you got everything?" he asked, holding out her coat for her.

"Yes, everything."

They left the apartment and started down the stairs. There was an old piece of bread somebody had left behind on the landing. She called his attention to it.

"Look," she said, pointing, "just like one of those neo-realistic movies, all that's missing is the girl in the black slip standing in the doorway." She didn't feel very clever today. He wasn't amused.

Outside, the little piazza was deserted, except for a group of young Italians in front of the cafe, leaning against their motorcycles and arguing about something in Roman dialect.

"We'll go to Rosatti's," he said, and they got into the car.

Driving through the morning traffic and then on the road that ran along the river, she looked out the window, concentrating on the moments jerking past; the trees that still in December managed to have leaves, how the sunlight was peculiarly clear today and sharpened everything you looked

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at until you wanted to blink it back into a more blurring normalcy. He appeared not to notice her silence.

He parked the car at the Piazza del Popolo and they got out and admired the obelisk with that proprietary admiration of people who have lived in a foreign country for more than a year and no longer feel obliged to react to every monument with extravagant enthusiasm.

"It's one of the nicest spots in Rome, you know?" he said.

"It's my favorite piazza."

Having said all there was to say on the subject, they went to have breakfast. The door of Rosatti's had an imposing sign on it, imploring everyone who entered to have a *Buon Natale*. Inside, the café was deserted except for a short man with a hat who leaned against the bar, seemingly hypnotized by the espresso machine. She thought he was probably a literary critic; they were always short and wore hats. It was too early yet for the writers and the painters who came everyday for an apéritif before lunch. The cashier contentedly counted up money and the short man continued to stare at the espresso machine.

"Please, can we sit down? I hate standing at the bar," she said.

"All right."

She followed him past a large table displaying stuffed animals with tinsel draped around their necks. She wondered which of the people who came here would ever be tempted to buy a pink giraffe. Certainly not Moravia or Pasolini or any of the other writers who argued at all hours about censorship and the stupidity of the Catholic Church.

He chose a table in the back and they sat down and ordered *capuccino* and a *dolce*.

"Just think," he said, "the day after tomorrow I'll be in Israel working on some kibbutz. Finally, I'm really going to go there."

"Yes, just think." She wanted to look brightly interested but the expression somehow eluded her.

The waiter set down the coffee cups and two dubious buns. She picked one up and began munching on it. She no longer cared what she said.

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"What's so great about working on a kibbutz anyhow? All this mysticism about getting your feet in Israeli sand. After all, you are American." She dared him to get angry.

"You don't understand. It means going back to your people, the old traditions, belonging, all that jazz. It means being proud to be a Jew."

"But why should it matter so much? It's people that matter."

She took another bite of the awful bun. It had bits of minced fruit inside, a further affront.

"Because Jews are different. We've always been different and we've suffered for it. You don't know what it's like to be Jewish."

"Oh, yes, I do. I do know what it's like," she said vehemently. "When I was in grammar school practically everybody was Jewish but me, and everybody took lessons: horseback riding and piano and ballet. And I didn't take any lessons at all."

"That's not what I'm talking about."

She went on anyway.

"And everybody lived in marvelous houses with finished basements and they gave parties where you danced and drank cream soda. And in the seventh grade there was a boy I liked named Joel who gave a huge party for his bar mitzvah. Only I wasn't invited. He told me about it afterwards. He said they gave him lots of presents. I remember he was very pleased about the presents."

"It's hard to be a good Jew, to know who you are and stick up for it. Take Maxine, for instance. She's a good Jew, her grandfather was a rabbi and her family sends her religious calendars with all the holidays marked out. She can laugh about the whole thing and she doesn't go to synagogue the way they'd like her to, but she's a good Jew."

She had listened to him so many times before tell her in the same mumbling incoherent way the story of the good Jew and she still didn't know what he meant, except that Maxine was one.

"Yes, of course, Maxine."

"Or me, even. So maybe I haven't seen the inside of a

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temple for a long time but the holidays, lighting the candles, all that stuff, it gets me. I don't know, it really gets to me." His face had that inspired expression, the one he always had whenever he talked about his people and his tradition and his unique difference.

She carefully put the bun back on the plate and picked up her purse. She mustn't cry here, she simply mustn't. He would be very annoyed. The cashier would stop counting her money. The little man by the espresso machine might even take off his hat in surprise. She mustn't cry.

"Excuse me, I have to go now. I just remembered I have to be some place."

She got up abruptly.

"Wait a minute. You haven't finished your coffee. Wait just a minute and I'll drive you home."

"No, it doesn't matter. I'll be all right. Call me before you leave, if you have a chance."

She hurried past the table with the pink giraffe and ran out the door, running down the street toward her pensione, running, not willing to cry yet, waiting until she got home, and it seemed to her that she was running away from the sunlight, the clear peculiar sunlight that sharpened all the edges of things, dividing one from the other, running also from the field of brightness behind her where line after line of young men were bending, cutting, gathering in grain. And working, they sang together, the words strange and proud, they sang and he was there among them singing too, not really knowing the words but he was proud and suntanned like the others. He had his glasses off.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

Frank Conroy is a graduate of Haverford College. "Please Don't Take My Sunshine Away" is an excerpt from his first novel, *Hanging On*, which will be published by The Viking Press.

Carolyn Gaiser, a graduate of Swarthmore College, lives in New York and has written articles for *New York* magazine and *Glamour*. "Differences" is her first published fiction.

Christina Stead was awarded last year's Aga Khan Fiction Prize for "George," a section from a longer work entitled *Girl From the Beach* that will be published by Holt, Rinehart & Winston in a volume called *The Puzzleheaded Girl*. Born in Sydney, Australia, she has lived and worked in France and the United States. Her home at present is in Surrey, England.

M. E. White is a Ph.D. candidate in philosophy at Ohio State University. Her novel *In the Balance* will be published by Harper & Row next year.

INTERVIEW

Ronald Christ, who teaches English and comparative literature at Manhattan College, is writing a study of Borges' fiction.

DIARY

John Cage has been active as composer, performer, teacher and author. His first collection of writings, *Silence*, appeared in 1961; his second, from which "Diary" is an excerpt, is entitled *A Year From Monday* and will be published this fall by Wesleyan University Press.

ART

Karl Pfahler was born in Germany in 1926, and studied at the Stuttgart Kunstakademie. He has had recent one-man expositions at the Fischbach Gallery in New York and the Galerie Müller in Stuttgart.

Harold Chapman was born in England in 1927, and has been an itinerant free-lance photographer since the age of twenty. His book of Les Halles photographs is to be published in France and the United States.

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POETRY

John Ashbery's most recent collection of poems, *Rivers and Mountains*, was published in 1966 by Holt, Rinehart & Winston; *Selected Poems* will soon be published in England by Jonathan Cape.

Ted Berrigan is the editor of "C" Press. *Bean Spasms*, a collaboration with Ron Padgett, will be published in August by Kulchur Press.

Jonathan Cott, born in New York City, studied at Columbia University (where he edited the *Columbia Review*) and at the University of California. He is a contributor to *Ramparts*, and has had poems in *Silo*, *Angel Hair* and *Intransit*.

Kenward Elmslie is the author of two books of poems, *Pavilions* and *Power Plant Poems*, and the opera librettos *Miss Julie*, *The Sweet Bye and Bye*, and *Lizzie Borden*. He lives in New York City and Calais, Vermont.

Ted Greenwald, a former editor of *Ear*, lives in New York City and attends New York University. He has had a book of poems, *Lapstrake*, published by Lines Books.

Ted Hughes has published two books of poems with Faber and Faber: *The Hawk in the Rain* and *Lupercal*. His latest collection, *Recklings*, was published in a limited edition by Turret Books (London) in 1967. He lives near Tawton in Devon.

Edward Kissam attended Princeton and Oxford, and recently taught at the National College of Lebanon. His poems have appeared in *Eggs*, *Poetry Review* and *Ice*.

James Schuyler has published a novel, *Alfred and Guinevere*, and two collections of poems, *Salute* and *May 24th or so*. A frequent contributor to *Art News*, he lives in Southampton, New York.

Aram Saroyan is to have a large collection of his poetry published by Kulchur Press in 1968. Saroyan completed his Lines Press series (six magazines, four books) in 1966. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Lewis Warsh, who lives in New York, is an editor of *Angel Hair*. A book of poems, *The Suicide Rates*, will be published by Toad Press in 1967.

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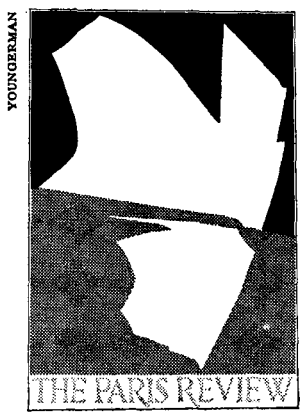

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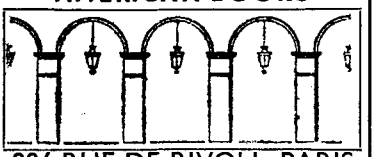

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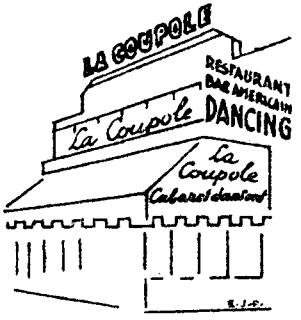

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